

# The Meadows School

School Road, Wooburn Green, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP10 0HF

## Inspection dates

30 November–1 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- The significant disruption in staffing at all levels has meant that the school's overall effectiveness has declined since the previous inspection.
- The current leadership structure is not sustainable and leaders are not securing the necessary improvements quickly enough.
- Pupils' achievement is inadequate. They make insufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics because they have had inadequate teaching over time.
- Teachers' expectations are too low. Teachers do not take enough account of pupils' different starting points when they plan work for them. Too few most-able pupils exceed the standards expected for their age.
- Reading and writing are not taught well enough. Pupils struggle to apply phonic skills when reading and their weak basic skills prevent them from making progress in writing.
- Pupils do not apply their mathematical skills well enough to solving problems.
- Not all pupils feel safe in school. They report that incidents of bullying are not always dealt with by adults. They say that fights break out in the playground and this makes them feel unsafe. Pupils' attendance is below average.
- Pupils do not have confidence that all adults in school care for them. They say that adults do not always listen to them and take their concerns seriously.
- Pupils do not behave as well as they should, particularly when they are not under the direct supervision of teachers. They waste valuable learning time when moving between different activities.
- The curriculum is narrow and restricts learning in certain subjects, particularly science, which is inadequately covered. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is weak and leaders have not ensured that fundamental British values are embedded.

### The school has the following strengths

- The governors now work in close partnership with the new headteachers and have started to bring about improvements.
- Children in the early years feel safe and they behave well. They are provided with interesting experiences that help them to learn.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Create a climate and culture of safety so that all pupils feel safe and secure by ensuring that:
  - all adults have a clear understanding of their legal and moral obligations to make sure that all pupils are and feel safe at school
  - pupils in key stages 1 and 2 know that all adults will treat them with respect and respond appropriately to their concerns
  - steps are taken to eliminate remaining issues of bullying and boisterous behaviour
  - action is taken to improve attendance for those groups of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate progress for all groups of pupils, by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do so that work is pitched at the right level
  - ensuring that teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subjects they teach
  - improving the way in which reading is taught throughout the school
  - ensuring that pupils develop basic skills in writing and develop these skills when learning other subjects
  - making sure that pupils develop and apply their thinking and problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
  - spreading leadership responsibilities more evenly across the school to build a sustainable leadership structure
  - making sure that subject leaders are better equipped to lead and develop their subject teams
  - providing a rich and balanced curriculum that enables pupils to develop their skills and excel across subjects
  - making sure that fundamental British values are promoted more widely through the curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- The school has been through a difficult period without a substantive headteacher until the start of this autumn term. In the past three years, there have been several different headteachers. A number of other leaders and teachers left and joined the school. The significant and constant instability in staffing has meant that previous weaknesses have not been addressed and pupils have a legacy of underachievement. Some staff worked at the school for just a short time and did not embrace the changes required.
- There have been recent changes to the leadership of subjects and other aspects of the school, including provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Currently, some leaders have a wide range of responsibilities that cannot be sustained over a longer period of time. Some subject leaders are relatively new and do not yet have the skills and experience to bring about improvements.
- Leaders and governors have failed to ensure that pupils feel safe in school and that they have confidence that all staff will listen to them and respond to their concerns. Pupils told inspectors that bullying occurs and that fights take place when adults are not looking. They do not know who to approach if they have a concern or worry. Consequently, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not promoted effectively.
- Leaders have not ensured that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed, particularly those who are most able and those from minority ethnic groups. Until recently, there were no systems to track pupils' progress and consequently, teachers did not know which pupils needed extra help or which pupils needed additional challenge.
- The curriculum is too narrow and does not give pupils enough opportunities to learn other subjects, including science, to any depth. There is too narrow an emphasis on English at the expense of other subjects and pupils become bored and lose interest in learning. This leads to unacceptable behaviour in class as pupils seek other distractions. Pupils have only a superficial understanding of British values.
- The use of visits and extra-curricular activities to enrich learning and add to pupils' enjoyment of school is limited. Although the primary sports funding is used appropriately, pupils report that there are now fewer opportunities to take part in competitions with other schools because the sports teacher has left the school.
- The new headteachers, with the full support of governors, have made a positive start and enjoy the confidence of parents and staff. They have implemented a programme of training and development to help teachers to improve their skills. This has been welcomed by teachers.
- On arrival, the new headteachers acted quickly, with the support of governors, to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. However, there has been insufficient time for their actions to bring about the necessary improvement. Many of the areas identified from the last inspection still remain in need of improvement.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's current position. They have

introduced policies and systems that were previously lacking. Consequently, there is a planned programme for checking teachers' work and a clear structure to manage teachers' performance. Plans to improve the school are based on an incisive analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Parents who responded to the survey report that they can already see a difference in the school.

- The new leadership has introduced comprehensive systems for recording and tracking pupils' progress. This allows them to analyse pupils' learning and progress and to identify where gaps lie. This shows that there are inequalities between groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Differences in progress between disadvantaged pupils and others are diminishing, although leaders recognise that this needs to happen more rapidly. They are reviewing the use of the additional funding to ensure that it is used more efficiently to provide disadvantaged pupils with the support they require.
- The school should not appoint any further newly qualified teachers.

### **Governance of the school**

- There has been a considerable change to the membership of the governing body in the past two years and a new chair of the governing body was appointed in the summer term.
- School leaders were not held sufficiently to account by previous governance. Not all governors visited school regularly or attended meetings. Consequently, some statutory policies were not monitored or evaluated effectively. Some, including for child protection, were out of date.
- Until recently, governors did not make good enough use of assessment information to ensure that all pupils made the best possible progress. They did not challenge school leaders to address the issues for improvement raised in the previous inspection report. Consequently, improvements since then have been too slow.
- New governors have been recruited with skills, experience and enthusiasm to shape the direction of the school. They took time to recruit the new headteachers, carefully taking into consideration the need to bring stability to the school. They ensure that all governors play a key part by allocating roles and responsibilities and holding each other to account.
- Governors have worked closely with the headteachers to begin to improve arrangements for safeguarding. They have updated the policy for child protection and associated documentation regarding the safeguarding of pupils.
- There is a planned programme of visits to school so that governors can see for themselves how well the school functions on a day-to-day basis. They have surveyed parents to seek their views and plan to extend this to survey pupils and to discuss their views of the school. Governors are fully aware that the quality of teaching needs to improve rapidly. They support the headteachers in changing the culture of the school so that pupils' needs come first.
- Governors have made corrections and additions to policies that were out of date or missing entirely. They are aware that some statutory information is still missing from the school's website. However, they are taking rapid action to rectify this.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Until recently, there has not been a culture that placed the pupils' needs first. Not all staff understood their moral and legal responsibility to keep pupils safe and to ensure that they felt safe in school. Consequently, pupils are not confident that all adults are approachable and will help to sort out any problems they may have.
- Leaders and governors have taken recent action to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding. All staff have now been trained in child protection procedures and the steps to follow should a concern be raised. The largely new team is aware of its responsibilities to keep pupils safe. All visitors to school are carefully checked and the school now follows the correct procedures when recruiting new staff.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Inadequate

- The quality of teaching varies considerably and is inadequate overall. Training provided by previous leaders has not been embedded and not all teachers currently in school fully understand the demands of the curriculum for English, mathematics and science.
- Teachers do not take pupils' learning needs into account when they plan work for them. They do not use information about what pupils already know and understand, so work is not pitched at the right level for pupils. This is particularly true for the most able pupils and those pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- Too many teachers have weak subject knowledge and are unable to pick up on pupils' misconceptions. Their checks on pupils' learning in class are weak and so errors go unnoticed and pupils fail to make progress. Too often, pupils are unclear about what they are to do or what they are to learn.
- Teachers have low expectations of what pupils can do and this is reflected in the quality of feedback they provide to pupils. Pupils do not act on feedback provided and so continue to make the same errors.
- Weak teaching has led to pupils having poor attitudes towards reading. Even those who are competent readers say they do not readily choose to read in school or at home. At the end of Year 2, pupils have a reasonable grasp of phonics but teaching has not ensured that they have the ability to use this securely when encountering an unknown word. This limits their ability to read fluently and confidently. In key stage 2, teachers do not use the time effectively to teach specific reading skills during dedicated sessions.
- The teaching of mathematics is weak. Pupils are not encouraged or supported well enough to apply their skills to problem-solving and mathematical investigations. They spend time repeating what they already know, rather than deepening their understanding.
- Too often, teaching assistants spend most of their time checking pupils' behaviour and do not provide enough teaching and learning support to pupils.
- There are small signs that teaching is starting to improve as a result of recent actions

taken by school leaders. Teachers are becoming increasingly confident to learn from experienced teachers from other schools and to try out new approaches for themselves. This can be seen in the higher standard of presentation of work in pupils' books.

- Where teaching is more effective, there are good relationships between teachers and pupils and this maintains pupils' attention. In these classes, pupils listen and respond to teachers' instructions and they behave well.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. Pupils say they do not feel safe in school. They say that physical bullying takes place but that adults do not always respond by 'sorting it out'. Pupils say there are variations in the approaches taken by adults and that some brush their concerns aside.
- Until recently, there has not been a culture of promoting safety within the school. Pupils say that fights and scuffles take place and that adults are not always available to help. They say that some name-calling is not always taken seriously.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe outside school. They have been taught about road safety and the need to take care of themselves physically. They know that some substances, including non-medicinal drugs can be harmful.
- Pupils have a very clear understanding of the dangers associated with modern technology. They know they should not provide personal information to strangers when online and that it is unkind to make personal comments about other people.
- The new headteachers are starting to take action to address pupils' concerns. They are aware that previous staffing issues meant that there were inconsistencies in the way in which staff responded to pupils but they are taking steps to improve this.
- Children in the early years feel safe and secure. This is because staff care for them and respond immediately to their concerns. They get on well together and happily share and take turns, showing consideration towards the feelings of others.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. Incidents of poor behaviour are frequent. Sometimes the start of the lesson is delayed because teachers have to resolve incidents that happen during morning break. When moving around the school, pupils do not always behave safely and there are incidents of pupils scuffling and shouting out.
- Pupils have not developed the self-discipline to manage their behaviour well. In classrooms, they respond to teachers' instructions, but when teaching fails to capture their interest they become easily distracted and need to be reminded how to behave by adults.
- Despite recent improvements, attendance is below average and a number of pupils are

frequently late for school.

- In those classes where teaching is stronger, pupils listen well and behave well. When activities capture their interest, they show positive attitudes towards their learning.
- New leaders have introduced systems to help teachers to manage pupils' behaviour. They have shared their expectations with all staff and pupils and consequently pupils are becoming more aware of the need to behave well in school.
- A large majority of pupils are friendly, helpful and polite to visitors.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Inadequate

- Pupils make inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. They are not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education. This is due to a legacy of weak teaching that current leaders are working to address. Many pupils have weak basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics that prevent them from progressing as well as they should.
- There is very little challenge for the most able pupils and consequently few reach the highest levels. The most able pupils are not encouraged to work at greater depth. Work in pupils' books shows that they make slow progress from their starting points.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups do not achieve as well as other pupils. They make slow progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because they are not challenged by teachers to do better.
- Disadvantaged pupils make inconsistent progress across the school, achieving well in some year groups but not in others. In the past, the pupil premium funding has not always been targeted at those pupils most in need and so their additional needs have not been met consistently well across the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make inadequate progress. This is because teachers do not have a clear enough understanding of their different learning needs. Often, they have the same work as other pupils and rely on support from teaching assistants. Although some have specific programmes of work, their progress is not checked closely enough.
- Pupils do not have a secure enough grasp of different strategies, including phonics, to help them to read. They fail to use punctuation to help them to read with expression and this means they often do not understand what they have read. Pupils show little enthusiasm for reading.
- Pupils across the school do not write as well as they should. They have weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and handwriting and so struggle to write fluently and confidently. Their writing lacks imaginative vocabulary and the structure of sentences is basic with little variation for effect. There is very little extended writing and pupils do not develop their writing skills well enough when learning other subjects.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in mathematics. This is because they do not sufficiently apply their skills to solve mathematical problems. This prevents them from deepening their understanding and developing fluency in the application of their skills.
- Pupils do not develop their knowledge and skills in other subjects, including science,

because of the disproportionate time spent on English and mathematics.

## Early Years Provision

## Requires improvement

- Children's achievement in the Reception class is varied. They make adequate rather than good progress overall and work in their learning journeys shows that the most able are not challenged as much as they should be. Some adults readily accept what children do with little challenge to help them to improve their letter and number skills.
- The early years leader is aware that the outdoor area needs to be improved to facilitate all areas of learning and has plans in place showing how this is to be achieved. However, staff currently make the best use of available space by carefully planning activities to meet the learning needs of children.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year dipped in 2016, largely owing to staffing issues. New leaders have put into place a structured programme of training and this is already showing an improvement both in the quality of teaching and what children are achieving. The majority of children are developing the skills that prepare them adequately for their future.
- Despite concerns in key stages 1 and 2, children in the early years are safe and they feel safe. Adults provide a high level of care to children. Consequently, children develop good social skills and are very well prepared for learning. They listen carefully to adults and to each other. Older children are particularly caring towards their younger classmates.
- All statutory requirements for provision in the early years are met. Staff have been well trained to enable them to provide a safe and secure environment both inside and outdoors. Equipment and resources are of good quality and are well cared for by children.
- Children have very positive attitudes towards learning. In the pre-school, children showed great curiosity in looking for textured objects outside. They took great delight in stamping their feet on the frosty grass to listen for the sound of crunching ice. They showed perseverance and resilience as they searched the outdoor area for interesting objects.



## School details

Unique reference number	110258
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10012273

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Pikulski
Headteacher	Emma O'Leary/Jo Moore
Telephone number	01628 521634
Website	<a href="http://www.themeadows.bucks.sch.uk">www.themeadows.bucks.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@themeadows.bucks.sch.uk">office@themeadows.bucks.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	8 July 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and pupils are taught in single-age classes.
- There has been significant instability in the teaching and the leadership team since the previous inspection. Following the resignation of the previous headteacher in July 2015, there was an interim period when two seconded leaders led the school from a local academy. Two permanent headteachers joined the school, as a job share arrangement, in September 2016.
- There are several new members of the governing body and a new chair of the governing body was appointed in the summer term.
- There is provision for children in the early years in the pre-school that is now managed by the school. Children aged two to four attend this provision on either a full or part time basis. Children in the Reception class attend full time.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by additional government funding, the pupil premium, is broadly average.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the school prospectus, admission arrangements and the 2016 performance information on its website. Information regarding the school's anti-bullying policy and governors' pecuniary interests is also missing.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils working in 16 lessons or parts of lessons; half of these observations were carried out with school leaders. They looked at work in pupils' books as well as that on display around the school. They attended an assembly and they listened to pupils reading in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, groups of pupils and the school improvement adviser from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust. The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Among the documents scrutinised were school development plans, records relating to pupils' learning and progress and minutes from governors' meetings. Inspectors also scrutinised information to show how the school keeps pupils safe.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing the 13 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and by speaking informally to parents during the inspection. There were no responses to the staff survey.

## Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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