

Castle Mead School

Mascroft Road, Hilperton, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 6GD

Inspection dates

14–15 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Strong leaders provide a clear vision for the school which is shared by all staff. Leaders and governors have ensured that, through a period of rapid growth and change, each pupil's education and well-being is at the heart of all they do.
- The professional development of all staff is integral to the school's performance. Teachers and teaching assistants are motivated by high-quality training and support.
- The school is inclusive. Many pupils who attend have a wide range of individual and complex needs. They receive high-quality care and support at this school which enables them to learn safely and well alongside their peers.
- The school's recent accolade, having been designated the host school for a social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) Centre of Excellence, reflects the ongoing high-quality support for vulnerable pupils.
- The culture of safeguarding and support for all pupils is strong.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are well prepared and pupils learn well. Teachers assess how well pupils are doing and plan new learning which helps them make good progress.
- In lessons and at play, pupils behave well. Consistent and well-understood systems are in place, which ensure learning is uninterrupted.
- Published data does not reflect the achievements of pupils currently in school. Outcomes for pupils in the majority of year groups are rising significantly and securely.
- Progress of the current pupils in the school is strong in reading and mathematics. Progress of current pupils in writing is slower.
- The school's curriculum is exciting, interesting and relevant. Trips, visitors and projects 'bring learning to life'. They engage and inspire pupils to learn well.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children learn by exploring, creating and playing together. Both inside and outside, the activities are well designed to meet the needs of these young learners. Staff have high expectations for what pupils can achieve and they provide a safe and caring learning environment.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of writing throughout the school by providing training and guidance for staff which
 - secures teachers' better understanding of what writing at the highest standards, for each year group, looks like
 - ensures that lessons and units of work give pupils opportunities to improve on their writing skills and build on them securely and rapidly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership is a strength of the school. The head of school works closely with the executive head of The Mead Academy Trust. Together, they have a clear vision and are committed to inclusion and serving the community. This is shared by staff and supported by governors.
- The rapid expansion of the school has resulted in a unique and challenging set of circumstances. Pupils have been welcomed from a wide range of previous schools and settings. In some instances, pupils have come with additional challenges and some have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some pupils have arrived at Castle Mead with skills and abilities well below those expected for their age. Leaders have warmly welcomed all pupils and immediately put the right support in place for them.
- Middle leaders, such as the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and leaders of mathematics and English, contribute significantly to school improvement. They actively support the professional development of staff through training and coaching.
- A strength of the school is leaders' determination to review rigorously any new approaches to teaching, or new schemes that have been purchased. This means that the school budget is used effectively and teachers are supported well in the development of their skills.
- The school's own evaluation is accurate. It forms the starting point for an effective school development plan which leaders, including governors, manage carefully and review regularly.
- A local authority adviser supports the school. The impact of her work contributes to the strength of the leadership team, who use this support to provide additional opportunities to reflect on and evaluate the work they do.
- The curriculum is very well planned to ensure that pupils learn a broad range of skills and develop a good understanding of the wider world, technology and science. Pupils' engagement is sharpened because they understand the purpose of their learning. For example, mathematics skills are applied to topics such as growing plants and designing catapults.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is enhanced by trips and visits. These are very much enjoyed by pupils; a trip to Longleat, they say, 'helps us learn about animals and habitats'.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of different cultures through their learning in religious education, history, geography and art. One of the school's values is equality. Leaders have designed the school building and its curriculum to help all pupils understand how to be respectful and tolerant in a diverse society.
- Pupils are well prepared for their future lives. They are given opportunities to develop an understanding of British values, such as democracy. For example, pupils recently organised their own election day, with manifestos and voting booths.

- Pupils in this school have 'a voice' and they confidently express views and opinions. They are listened to by staff, and they listen to each other. Through the school council, pupils understand that their actions can make a difference. For example, the school council organised a project to help tidy the classroom environment. The Youth Parliament ensured that visits were made by the school to a local old people's home.
- The school is at the heart of the local community. Family groups are held in the school hall and the school's parent support adviser (PSA) meets regularly to support parents with home or school issues. Parents value these 'coffee mornings with a difference'.
- Staff are extremely well supported in their professional development. They benefit from a close relationship with the nearby teaching school. Staff are encouraged to try new ideas and follow their career aspirations. As a result, staff are highly motivated and their teaching skills continue to improve. Increasingly, Castle Mead staff are being asked to support other staff in other schools.
- The school provides regular communication to parents via newsletters, termly reports on progress, through social media and an informative school website. As a result, the majority of parents are happy with the school and the information it provides.
- Leaders carefully scrutinise the impact of the pupil premium funding (the additional money to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils) and the additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Owing to the careful review of projects and support programmes, this funding has a positive effect on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEND. Many pupils in both of these groups have made accelerated progress.
- Sport premium funding has been spent wisely. For example, the new play equipment purchased with this money has ensured that all pupils are active at lunchtime.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is good. The governors hold the school to account well. At regular meetings, they discuss key issues that arise from their monitoring visits, or from the analysis of assessment information.
- The governors have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are ambitious for the school. They support the leaders' commitment to inclusion and their desire to serve the community well.
- Governors are ambitious for the school and they work hard. They visit the school often and provide challenge and support through asking teachers questions about what they have seen.
- The governors are involved in tracking the progress of the school's development plan. Governors' close scrutiny of the school's work is a feature of all meetings, which ensures they understand the progress the school is making. This work is supported well through reports from the headteacher.
- The school's finances are managed carefully. Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent appropriately and good support is given to these pupils. Pupil premium funding is also spent wisely and is making a positive

difference. Governors review this spending, alongside school leaders, and publish a comprehensive report. Governors ensure that the additional sport premium funding is spent to enable pupils to attend a range of sporting clubs and events, as well as improve the quality of teaching in physical education (PE) lessons.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff are aware of their responsibilities around keeping pupils safe in school.
- Leaders, including governors, are regularly trained to a high level. Regular information and further training ensures that all staff are up to date with current safeguarding requirements. No member of staff begins work at Castle Mead without having undertaken safeguarding training.
- Concerns are reported immediately, and appropriate and timely action is put in place. Leaders liaise with other agencies, such as children's social care, when necessary and they follow up concerns if they feel this is needed. Good and regular communication with parents contributes to pupils' safety and well-being.
- Risk assessments have been undertaken to ensure that the current building work is safely managed. Pupils say they feel safe in school.
- Leaders follow a clear protocol for employing staff. References and employment history for new members of staff are thoroughly checked before they take up their posts.
- Governors and leaders complete the local authority's annual safeguarding audit. Governors regularly monitor the school's systems and safeguarding is always discussed at their meetings.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan effective and interesting lessons and topics that engage the pupils and spark their interest. This means that pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress.
- Teachers seek opportunities to make links between learning. For example, design and technology and science lessons often include opportunities for pupils to use their mathematics skills. This makes learning purposeful and pupils' understanding and interest develop well as a result.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. In lessons, this means explanations about new learning are clear and help to promote good skills and understanding. Teachers use questioning skilfully. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils were asked a range of carefully chosen questions to develop their understanding of the many different ways a set of shapes can be sorted.
- The staff provide useful feedback to pupils to help them develop their understanding. The school's system for marking in books is used consistently across the school and is well understood by pupils. Pupils understand the benefits of feedback. They say that, even when a pupil makes a mistake, 'green spots (the school's system) are good, because they mean you have to learn something!'

- Pupils who have not understood work are given additional guidance and support at the earliest opportunity. This approach is a key feature of the school and one that is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils are also given time to reflect on their learning. This is particularly effective in mathematics, where they are encouraged to think about what they have learned. As well as reflecting on new skills and understanding, pupils are also encouraged to think about why they have learned this topic. For example, in learning about measures, pupils reflect on why learning about mass is helpful in daily life.
- Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting pupils. They contribute to pupils' learning, well-being and personal development. They provide essential support for pupils with significant additional needs, which enables these pupils to feel included in the class. In addition, teaching assistants support the learning and behaviour of all pupils. At its best, this is done unobtrusively, which allows learning and teaching to flow smoothly.
- Lessons provide opportunities for pupils to 'tussle' with tricky questions in mathematics. As a result, pupils are now more confident to solve problems and explain how they came to an answer. Pupils' understanding in mathematics is supported well with mathematical apparatus and equipment. Displays in the classroom are used by pupils to help them remember key number facts and methods of calculation.
- Grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught systematically and reinforced through many writing opportunities. As a result, standards through key stage 2 are improving.
- Reading is taught well; pupils enjoy reading and make good progress. They apply their reading skills to other areas of the curriculum. For example, children learn about Scott of the Antarctic by analysing reports written about his expedition.
- Pupils' skills in phonics are developed at a good pace and they are making good progress. Young pupils are already reading complex digraphs, such as 'ew' in the word 'chew'. By the end of Year 2, pupils can apply their phonics understanding to read and spell complex words such as 'afterwards' and 'exactly'.
- There is not enough opportunity, particularly in key stage 1, for the most able pupils to practise and extend more complex writing skills. Progress is also slower when teachers do not give pupils enough time to build on what they have learned in a previous writing lesson.
- Regular and robust assessments contribute to the teachers' and leaders' accurate understanding of progress. Assessment information is used regularly to plan pupils' next steps in learning. This means that pupils in danger of falling behind are quickly given additional support. It also means that many pupils have quickly progressed from low starting points to be achieving well alongside their peers.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their learning. They learn the skills needed, and they develop good approaches to learning. For example, the children in the early years have a good set of phonics skills, and behave very well in lessons. These children are ready for Year 1.
- Pupils throughout the school complete homework regularly. It reinforces understanding from lessons in school and gives pupils a chance to practise basic skills such as spelling and number facts.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- An ethos of vigilance and care means that pupils' safety and well-being is a constant priority and focus for all staff. As a result, pupils feel safe and are happy to come to school.
- Pupils have the right information to keep themselves safe, including how to keep safe online. They say that every lesson on computers begins with a reminder about e-safety.
- Pupils know that the staff are trusted adults who would help them if they had any worries or concerns. Many pupils, especially those with social, emotional or mental health issues, are given considerable additional support and care, which has made a positive difference to their confidence and well-being.
- Pupils understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Lunchtimes have a lively focus on eating healthily and there are opportunities for pupils to try new food. Physical education is taught by well-trained staff and after-school clubs are well attended.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values including democracy and respect. These are supported by 'FREDICE' – an acronym for the school values which all pupils know well. As a result, they understand what it is to be a good and responsible citizen. Racist incidents have rapidly reduced and are now extremely rare due to high-quality teaching in this area and a highly inclusive ethos.
- Many pupils are confident, particularly the pupils who have been at Castle Mead School for a long time. They lead assemblies and speak confidently in lessons. The school council makes a significant difference – members lead the school in a range of projects, including supporting local and worldwide charities such as Wiltshire Air Ambulance and Children in Need.
- Pupils' welfare is at the heart of school leaders' work. Pupils' personal development and well-being are supported effectively through alternative provision, such as the nearby equine centre and forest school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good for great majority of the time. Around the school, pupils are respectful and show good manners to staff and each other. Good behaviour in lessons means that learning progresses smoothly and without interruption. Pupils say the new behaviour system is effective; they like it and say it has made a positive difference.
- Assemblies are a time when respect and good listening skills are reinforced. As a result, pupils are able to learn key messages such as the importance of cooperation.

- At lunchtime, the staff play-leaders use resources to engage pupils and play games. This weekly focus means pupils have happy, collaborative and productive playtimes.
- There are very few incidents of bullying. Pupils are very clear about what this is and have created a booklet for their parents. The school deals with bullying promptly and effectively, involving both pupils and their parents.
- Attendance is improving. A large proportion of pupils have additional educational needs that mean they attend part time for a given period. This means that attendance figures, although much better than last year, are still below national averages. The school works tirelessly with parents to ensure that pupils are in school as often as possible. This has made a considerable difference in many cases and attendance has improved as a result.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The progress and achievement of current pupils is strong in most year groups and in most subjects across the school.
- The rapid growth in the number of pupils attending this school means that many pupils are new. Where pupils have been at the school for at least two years, their progress has been particularly good.
- The published data for key stage 2 in recent years has been below national expectations. Pupils at the end of key stage 2 did not meet expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 and they did not meet the government's floor standards for these three subjects combined. The particular needs of pupils in these small cohorts of pupils have meant that, despite making good progress while they have been at this school, pupils have not achieved the expected standards. However, there is secure and robust evidence, based on assessments validated by the inspection team, that an increasing proportion of pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are on track to achieve at least expected standards by the end of key stage 2.
- In key stage 2, progress in reading and mathematics is rapid. Pupils are able to explain how they answer complex problems in mathematics. Outcomes in writing are steadily improving in key stage 2, but not as rapidly as mathematics and reading. Progress is at its strongest when specific support is given by the literacy leader.
- The most able pupils in key stage 2 are achieving well from their starting points, particularly in reading and mathematics. Most-able pupils do well in some classes, but not all, in developing more complex writing skills. In Year 6, the most able pupils are able to write using engaging ideas and techniques, such as personification, to interest the reader. For example, one pupil wrote, 'The river spiralled into a continuous long chocolatey circle which seemed to suck Augusta in.' More and more pupils are working at higher standards.
- Current assessment information shows that pupils' progress and attainment in grammar and spelling across the school have improved since the beginning of the year. Pupils' skills in this area are practised regularly through extended pieces of writing.

- Pupils in key stage 1 met expected standards for writing and mathematics in 2016. However, many pupils did not reach the national standard in reading at key stage 1 in 2016. The large majority joined Castle Mead during Year 2 and, therefore, did not have long to benefit from the good teaching at this school. These pupils are now making stronger progress and all, apart from those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are on track to achieve the school's expectations in reading by the end of Year 3.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to read, and lessons are dedicated to developing skills of comprehension and understanding. Books are valued and high-quality class sets ensure that pupils listen to a range of interesting and engaging stories by renowned children's authors. As a result, pupils in key stage 1 are on track to meet national expectations by the end of this school year.
- Year 1 pupils achieve well in their phonics and the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the screening check is steadily rising. This is as a result of good phonics teaching.
- Extra funding from the government to support disadvantaged pupils is used to provide a wide range of activities that help them to make good progress. Disadvantaged pupils have extra and specialist help where needed. Leaders regularly review their achievements and, as a result, they often make better than expected progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well supported by a very knowledgeable SENCo and an inclusion leader from the academy trust. The support given to these pupils, particularly around their social and emotional development, is highly effective. As a result, these pupils have increasingly positive attitudes to their learning and they are making good progress.
- In the small number of cases where boys' attainment is lower than girls, it is due to lower starting points. Progress for both groups is good.
- Pupils' artwork is valued. It is displayed and celebrated around the school. Pupils practise skills in lessons and this leads to some good progress and finished pieces of work. Artwork is linked to many other curriculum areas and is also an opportunity to nurture pupils' spiritual development.
- Pupils make good progress in science. This is due to a well-planned curriculum that is regularly reviewed. Pupils have good opportunities to investigate and they often come up with their own ideas and questions.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the early years classes are happy and eager to come to school. This is because, as soon as Nursery children arrive in the morning, they are engaged in a range of activities. For example, they build towers with toy bricks, have some quiet time with a book on big cushions, explore in the sand outside and play 'camping' in the pop-up tent with a sleeping bag and pretend cooking equipment.
- Learning in the early years is exciting and engaging. Staff take great care to ensure that children have a wide range of interesting activities to support their learning. As a result, children develop positive approaches to school life. Children have opportunities to be creative and lead their own learning. Topics such as 'under the sea' are planned

from their own ideas and interests.

- The environment for these young children is well thought out and secure. The early years staff are well trained and well informed about safeguarding.
- Young children are developing good life skills. They are well mannered and, unprompted, say 'thank you' when an adult helps them. These young children are resilient and determined. They will stick at a task, even if it gets tricky, and so their confidence is developing well.
- Through the early years, children make very good progress from a range of starting points. The percentage of children who meet the early learning goals at the end of Reception is above the national average. The figure is much higher than the percentage of children who start school at a standard which is typical for their age.
- Boys are not performing as well as girls in the area of personal, social and emotional development. However, from their starting points, boys are progressing equally well in reading, writing and mathematics. Typically, children are ready to begin Year 1 by the end of their time in the early years.
- Disadvantaged children also make good progress from their starting points. The government funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well by early years leaders. This has led to some accelerated progress for these pupils, so that they are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Children develop their mathematical understanding very well through play. Their language development is a key focus of the early years. Children develop good reading skills because of the skilful guidance of adults.
- All adults in the early years are involved in assessing children regularly. This information is used well to inform future teaching.
- The school works closely with other pre-school providers and forms good partnerships with parents. Parents are engaged with their child's learning as they attend the regular meetings and open evenings organised by the school. As a result, the staff are well informed and parents are very positive about their child's learning in the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	140223
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10033103

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

Type of school	Primary (including Nursery)
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	266
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Jayne Bullock
Executive headteacher	Lyssy Bolton
Head of school	Tracy Boulton
Telephone number	01225 768641
Website	www.castlemead.wilts.sch.uk/
Email address	office@castlemead.wilts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school does not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 2.
- Castle Mead School is an average-sized primary school. Children in the early years are taught in separate Nursery and Reception classes. There are 76 children registered for Nursery places. The school is due to expand to 14 classes in September 2017, with an additional resource base for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school has grown rapidly since opening in September 2014 with 86 pupils.

- The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is slightly lower than the national average.
- The deprivation indicator for this school is low.
- The number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than the national average.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Other pupils are from a variety of minority ethnic groups.
- The school provides before- and after-school care.
- The school is part of The Mead Multi-Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and teaching in a range of lessons, from the Nursery class through to Year 6. Several observations of learning were carried out alongside the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of teachers, some governor and trust representatives, an adviser from the local authority, the English and mathematics leader, the SENCo, the executive headteacher and head of school.
- Inspectors scrutinised assessment information provided by the school, and published assessment information from recent years. They looked at a range of evidence, including behaviour reports, attendance information and procedures for safeguarding. Inspectors carefully considered the school's self-evaluation and its current development plan, alongside governors' minutes and anonymised performance management reports.
- Work produced by the pupils since September was examined carefully, alongside other assessments in the early years and work on display around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of pupils from across the school, including members of the school council and the sports council. Many were spoken to informally at playtime or lunch. The inspectors listened to a wide range of pupils read.
- The inspection team took into account the comments made by parents on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as previous parent questionnaires. The inspectors also spoke to parents informally at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Liz Wilson-Chalon, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lizzy Meadows	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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