

# Meridian Primary School

Harbour Avenue, Comberton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB23 7DD

## Inspection dates

30–31 January 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Under the determined leadership of the headteacher and governors, an ethos of high expectations is now secure since the last inspection.
- Governors share the ambition to improve the school further. They play a key role in the school's success and focus on actions that secure further improvement.
- Leaders ensure that the school maintains a supporting ethos of values so that pupils' personal development and welfare, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are also good.
- The leadership of the early years is effective. The proportion of children attaining and exceeding a good level of development in the early years class is now good.
- Subject leaders are aware that they can raise achievement in mathematics and writing further by raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve through good teaching.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Equality of opportunity and good relationships are fostered effectively.
- Outcomes for most pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are good across the school.
- Pupils make rapid progress in reading across the school because of the high-quality teaching of phonics and pupils' achievement in reading by the end of key stage 1.
- Teachers usually match work to pupils' abilities. However, some tasks do not provide sufficient challenge, and pupils, particularly the most able, do not always reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Senior leaders' plans include work to further improve teaching across all subjects. However, training does not necessarily tackle gaps in some teachers' subject knowledge.

## Full report

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

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders, including governors, by ensuring that:
  - subject leaders raise their expectations to make sure the quality of pupils' work is consistently good across the school and enables strong progress across the curriculum
  - professional development is planned incisively to improve the quality of teaching where subject knowledge is not yet secure.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
  - sharing and building upon the good practice in teaching mathematics that can be found in the school
  - providing work for the most able pupils that challenges them and enables them to make sustained progress throughout each year.
- Improve the achievement of pupils in writing, by:
  - providing high-quality opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills across a range of subjects and with a variety of purposes.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher, supported by the governors, has been instrumental in rapidly improving achievement across the school. As a result, the school has significantly improved since the last inspection. Senior and subject leaders share the passion, ambition and drive of the headteacher to make the school the best that it can be. All leaders commit to eradicating anything that is second best and are ambitious to improve further.
- The local authority has provided some effective support, specifically working with the headteacher to tackle weaknesses in teaching and to develop the capacity of leaders throughout the school. The amount of support received since the school's last inspection has diminished because of the school now having a secure and proven capacity to increase pupils' outcomes even further.
- Teachers have clear targets to meet each year and these are linked to how well their pupils achieve. Success in achieving these targets forms the basis of the teachers' opportunities for development or salary improvements. The governing body scrutinises this aspect of the school's work carefully and takes responsibility for the performance of the headteacher through their newly devised committee structure.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It covers a wide range of subjects and provides good-quality activities that promote enjoyment and a love of learning. A wide range of clubs, school trips, and artistic and cultural events enhance learning. For example, school clubs include art, craft and chess competitions that promote diligence, concentration and inter-personal relationships between pupils of all ages. Visits to Ely Cathedral and an on-site cycle training programme are further examples of how the school provides a curriculum that promotes spiritual and social development.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and is embedded throughout the curriculum. Pupils can talk about different faiths and cultures other than their own. Work displayed shows pupils' developing understanding of different faiths. For example, inspectors saw a display of pupils' work in key stage 2 for the Muslim festival and celebration of Eid in the local community.
- The promotion of equal opportunities and positive approaches to behaviour contribute to the ethos of the school, where good relationships are fostered very effectively.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. For example, the spiritual and social development of pupils who are disadvantaged is supported by having financial support for travel to attend trips. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their engagement in learning is improving.
- Sport funding to develop pupils' ability in physical education is having a good impact. A programme of training to support teachers has resulted in greater confidence in the teaching of sport. A wider range of sports clubs, including gymnastics training and netball provision, impacts well on the healthy lifestyles and fitness of pupils.
- Subject leaders have a clear role in school improvement. Teachers are delegated defined areas of responsibility across the school's provision. They are now accountable

to oversee the planning of work that teachers undertake, monitoring and evaluating the progress seen in writing and mathematics. Leaders are currently working to ensure that they now have an effective impact on pupils' learning by regularly reviewing work in pupils' books.

- Senior leaders work systematically to improve approaches to teaching across all subjects. However, the identification of teachers' development needs and further training is not always used to encourage, challenge and support them in their roles, for example in building subject knowledge. Many teachers reported that best practice is not always shared widely enough to ensure that teachers make the best decisions they can in subject areas such as mathematics.
- The school has very good links with parents. It provides detailed information to parents about the broad and balanced curriculum through a revised website and weekly newsletters. Home learning provides activities that pupils can carry out with family members.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body has been effective in holding the headteacher to account. Governors have had access to a wide range of resources and training, which has helped them to fulfil their statutory duties.
- A review of governance since the last inspection has indicated that the governing body now effectively has the capacity and understanding of how to support and challenge the school to ensure that outcomes remain good. The governing body has been restructured to include a standards committee and a finance, policies and personnel committee, and this has been highly successful in ensuring that the school remains focused to achieve its ambitious aims within the school development plan.
- The governing body is now well informed, skilled and able to have a positive impact on school improvement. The governors are looking at the school's development priorities over the next three years.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff know how to keep pupils safe at school and know what to look for if pupils present any signs that are concerning. Pupils say they feel safe and most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said their children are safe at school.
- Safeguarding procedures and checks on staff meet statutory requirements. Governors have been trained in safer recruitment. Staff are up to date with all government training requirements. Members of staff are clear about all school safeguarding procedures.
- School files for pupils who are more vulnerable are well organised. Record-keeping is effective, and the designated safeguarding lead has clear systems in place if referrals or additional support are required. She is tenacious in following up concerns with other agencies.
- Leaders place a high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe in school and well cared for. The school makes careful checks when appointing new staff and has now

developed systems for checking the suitability of staff employed by other companies that provide services, such as catering, to the school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching has improved since the school was previously inspected, and continues to improve. The impact of teaching on learning, including in reading, writing and mathematics, is reflected in the good progress pupils now make in each year group.
- Teaching has many strengths across a range of subjects, including history, geography, music, physical education and religious education. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils' progress in reading is strong across the school. Some pupils make rapid progress because of the high-quality teaching of phonics and pupils' achievement in reading by the end of key stage 1.
- Classrooms are designed to be a source of guidance to pupils in their learning and pupils check the attractive displays of facts and prompts to help them become independent in their writing. Equally, pupils work closely together and gain from opportunities to explain their ideas to others.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to structure learning effectively. For example, pupils in key stage 2 were encouraged to pay attention to presentation and precision in vocabulary when writing compound sentences. The teacher encouraged pupils to use similes, metaphors, alliteration and figurative language to improve their work. As a result, pupils are confident and reflective learners.
- The teaching of mathematics, including the basic skills of number and mental calculation, is consolidated regularly. For example, pupils were asked to explain why 1.007 could not be larger than 1.01. Pupils used their skills to reason out the answer using place value.
- Homework supports the exciting and engaging curriculum, which is designed to spark pupils' curiosity. When inspectors spoke to pupils and parents, they reported that they enjoy the homework activities and understand the benefits they have in helping them to progress as learners.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils are accurate and show clearly the next steps required to help them make progress. Pupils' books show that they are challenged well and are accessing a curriculum which is helping them to build on their prior knowledge throughout each year group. As a result, the proportion of current pupils working at age-related expectations across the school is at least in line with the national average.
- As a result of the rigorous and systematic teaching of phonics, pupils are getting off to a fast start in their reading. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above that found nationally for a second year. Pupils are quickly developing a love of reading. Key stage 1 pupils were thrilled to read their guided reading book and explored unfamiliar adjectives such as 'hairy' and 'rotter' using their phonic knowledge confidently.
- Teaching assistants typically make a good contribution to learning for lower-attaining pupils and those who require additional support. Inspectors observed them question

pupils effectively to probe their understanding and then explain ideas in simpler terms.

- Teachers usually match work accurately to pupils' abilities, but occasionally work can lack challenge, especially for the most able pupils. Leaders have prioritised more pupils to work at greater depth in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- At times, teachers are not developing the length and detail of pupils' writing sufficiently well. For example, in a key stage 2 lesson pupils had insufficient time to complete writing tasks or act upon verbal feedback.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There is a strong ethos throughout the school. All members of the school share and discuss the school's values regularly and pupils can articulate them well.
- The relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils follow instructions readily and move around the classroom without fuss. When teachers adopt the school's behaviour policy consistently this ensures that pupils are always attentive.
- Pupils speak candidly about the importance of staying safe in a range of ways. They speak knowledgeably about the importance of internet safety.
- Pupils know about bullying; they can say what it is, and they say there is very little in the school. Records of incidents show that bullying is exceptionally rare. Pupils talk positively about the work the school does to prevent bullying, for example through a planned curriculum that helps pupils understand how people are unique and different. Pupils say that they feel confident to report incidents to staff and that if anything happens, it is dealt with quickly.
- Pupils have a strong sense of their place as local and global citizens. A display of pupils' work on the geography of Brazil examined the similarities and differences between their local climate and population.
- Almost all pupils attend school every day they can. However, the absence of a small number of identified pupils has reduced the rate of school attendance for the last year to broadly average. Attendance levels are rising once again this year and good strategies by school leaders are tackling any individual cases of unauthorised absence.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils show high levels of respect and care for each other, valuing others' opinions and working cooperatively in lessons. The school is, rightly, proud that its values of 'confidence, courtesy, responsibility and adventure' are threaded through all aspects of its work.
- Pupils behave consistently well in lessons. From the early years on, pupils follow clear classroom routines. They value their learning, present their work neatly and told inspectors, 'We appreciate that everyone likes to help each other: in turn they help you

when you need it.' Pupils work hard, persevere and take the initiative to use dictionaries and other learning resources.

- Pupils' conduct at social times is orderly and responsible. During break and lunchtimes, they play happily together.
- Leaders keep detailed records of behavioural incidents, and these show that serious incidents are exceptionally rare. They have reacted firmly and appropriately to establish the school's current orderly environment, and use fixed-term exclusion on a very few occasions. Pupils who join the school with challenging behaviour respond well to tailored plans which address their needs.
- Parents are highly positive about the ethos of the school and as one parent wrote, reflecting the thoughts of others: 'My children are keen to go to school every day. I strongly believe this is because of the supportive and stimulating environment in which they are educated.'

### Outcomes for pupils

### Good

- In 2017, pupils' progress and attainment in key stage 2 were above the national average in reading and were in line with the national average in writing and mathematics. Current pupils are making consistently strong progress in reading and improvements in achieving greater depth in writing.
- Pupils are now making consistently strong progress across Years 1 and 2. The proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in the 2017 Year 2 assessment data was above the national average. A slightly smaller proportion of pupils than that found nationally were working at a greater depth of understanding in writing but this does not include middle-attaining pupils.
- Progress is continuing to improve across key stage 2. Current pupils are making strong progress in their learning from their individual starting points in all year groups, and a large proportion work at expected standards for their age across the school.
- As a result of the effective and strategic use of the pupil premium funding, current disadvantaged pupils in each year group make good progress in reading. Over time, there has been a difference between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and the progress and attainment of other pupils nationally, but this is now diminishing quickly.
- Teachers make effective provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Where needed, detailed individual support plans are in place, with many including a focus on speech and language. As a result, the progress made by these pupils is largely good from their individual starting points.
- There is evidence of high-quality writing in key stage 1 and appropriate levels of challenge are evident across the school in spelling and handwriting. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 read fluently and can talk confidently about their books.
- Work in pupils' books shows that pupils often make rapid gains in their learning, across a range of subjects including history, geography and religious education. Pupils take great pride in their work and so their presentation is of a very high standard, particularly by the time they begin key stage 2. The challenge that is given for most-

able pupils across a range of classes means that they often learn to write to a very high standard.

- Most-able pupils make generally good progress, but some of them do not reach the higher standards in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Outcomes for children are good in reading, writing, number and shape, space and measure. Current children are making strong progress from their individual starting points. The proportion of children attaining and exceeding a good level of development is much improved since the previous inspection.
- The early years provision is well led. The early years leader shares the headteacher's passion to provide the highest quality education for the children in her care. She has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development. She has made very good use of the resources provided to develop outdoor provision for the development of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders quickly gain an accurate understanding of what each child can achieve. Adults plan tasks to support children's interests and abilities. As a result, children who are disadvantaged make progress in line with the national average.
- Children are confident, inquisitive learners. For example, in a water activity, one child mentioned how mysterious the water looked. When asked why, the child spoke of how 'spooky and dark' it appeared. This shows how well the teaching is developing their vocabulary through effectively chosen reading tasks.
- Adults have developed a rich and balanced curriculum that interests and engages children. Because of enthusiastic and skilful teaching, children quickly acquire skills and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, in a mathematics lesson, children were asked to arrange corks to form a national flag and count the number of flags. Children were challenged to make even further progress by recording the calculations they discovered when organising their corks.
- Children make good progress in a broad range of skills that prepare them well for more formal teaching approaches in Year 1. Parents are very positive about the early years setting and said their children are happy at school. The school's use of an online learning journey enables parents to contribute to their children's assessments. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and encouraged to support their learning at home.
- Children enjoy their learning. Their behaviour is good and often it is exemplary. Children play well together. Adults encourage teamwork through adult-supported activities.
- Adults are vigilant in their supervision of children and care for the children's well-being. Leaders ensure that legal requirements are met and that safeguarding is effective.
- All teachers teach phonic skills well. Already this year children can use digraphs such as 'ee' and 'th' to aid reading tasks that have been carefully chosen after the teaching of letters and sounds.
- Although children's interests are normally sustained, lapses can occur when adults do



not sharply intervene to re-engage them with activities that need more concentration to apply newly developing skills such as writing.

- As the school generally has children who enter the early years with skills appropriate to their age, more could be done to ensure that more children are exceeding age-related expectations in writing by the end of the year.

## School details

Unique reference number	110626
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10041756

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Newton
Headteacher	Carole Etchie
Telephone number	01223 262423
Website	<a href="http://www.meridianprimary.co.uk">www.meridianprimary.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@meridian.cambs.sch.uk">head@meridian.cambs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	6 July 2016

## Information about this school

- The school is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, for whom the school receives additional government funding, is well below average. In Year 6 in 2017, there were too few disadvantaged pupils for their attainment to be compared to that of others without the risk of identifying individuals.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school has recently recruited an acting assistant headteacher.
- The governing body has elected a new chair of the governing body since the previous inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons, of which three were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised the quality of work in pupils' books, accompanied by a senior leader, a subject leader and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils to seek their views about the school and listened to the views of many other pupils during lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes. They also listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, acting assistant headteacher, staff, governors, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors took into consideration the responses of 17 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including: the school development plan; the school's view of its own performance; data relating to pupils' attainment and progress; governors' minutes; information on attendance; records about behaviour and safeguarding; and school policies.
- Inspectors took account of the 82 responses to the online Parent View survey and spoke with parents at the start of each school day.

## Inspection team

Sean Powell, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Marek Krzanicki	Ofsted Inspector

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