

# Meadow Park Academy

Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG30 6BS

## Inspection dates

18–19 April 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>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- This is a good and improving school. All leaders and staff share the headteacher's unswerving ambition to help pupils do as well as they can.
- Leaders and governors, with the support of the academy trust, have effectively led improvements in teaching, learning and pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils' progress has accelerated.
- Children make rapid progress in the early years, due to the extremely effective provision. They thrive within the highly supportive and imaginatively resourced environment.
- Pupils make better progress in mathematics than in English. Some pupils lack comprehension skills and are not confident in using their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar when writing.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly. Engaging teaching and an imaginatively designed curriculum have increased pupils' enjoyment of learning.
- Pupils' positive attitudes are evident in their increased attendance rates. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds are mutually respectful within a harmonious community.
- Pupils' self-esteem is improving as they rise to increased levels of challenge and experience growing success.
- The school's pastoral provision is outstanding. Leaders' focus on ensuring pupils' personal, social, and emotional well-being is much appreciated by parents and carers.

## Full report

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

- Accelerate pupils' achievement in English, so that it more closely matches that in mathematics, by:
  - developing pupils' confidence in using their secure skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar when writing for different purposes
  - extending pupils' vocabulary and their skills in drawing inference from texts to improve their comprehension.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. She plays a pivotal role in sustaining the school's vision, expressed in its motto, 'where learning takes root and imagination takes flight'. The school's inclusive ethos is evident at every turn. Pupils, parents, and staff hold the leadership team in high regard due, not least, to the significant improvements over the last two years.
- The school's values exhort pupils to be responsible, determined, proud and respectful. These traits are manifest in pupils' increasingly positive attitudes to learning, their determination to do as well as they can, and their accelerating progress.
- Senior leaders and middle leaders are highly effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses and driving improvements. Phase and subject leaders relish the sense of empowerment, and their passion and commitment shine through their work. They provide role models for colleagues in their own planning and teaching. Expectations are high.
- As a result of the combined efforts of leaders at every level, the quality of teaching has risen, and pupils' progress has accelerated. Teachers have responded positively to being encouraged to adopt a more creative approach to teaching and learning.
- Leaders keep a sharp eye on pupils' progress. They ensure that assessments provide accurate information and analyse data carefully to spot any anomalies in the performance of individuals and different groups. In addition, leaders regularly look at pupils' work to check their progress and attainment, and the quality of presentation.
- The quality of teaching and learning is reviewed regularly. Good practice is shared and, where necessary, additional support is provided. Staff, including teaching assistants, benefit from the skilled guidance and coaching of leaders, together with an extensive programme of additional training.
- Leaders use the outcomes of self-evaluation, together with external reviews, to formulate precise improvement plans. These plans are ambitious, reflecting leaders' unswerving determination to ensure that all pupils build well on their starting points.
- Staff at all levels have been involved in devising the school's curriculum. This combines history, geography, art and music, and opportunities for pupils to practise, consolidate and extend their literacy and numeracy skills. There is a clear rationale focused on addressing barriers to pupils' achievement through an emphasis on engagement and enjoyment. Teachers are successfully implementing this approach, while not losing sight of the key knowledge pupils need to acquire. This innovation is having a positive impact on pupils' motivation, achievement and, not least, their rates of attendance.
- Leaders keep the curriculum under review to ensure that themes and activities prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain, and contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils regularly, to check that differences between their achievement and that of other pupils are diminishing. The school has taken part in an Achievement for All programme, which has helped teachers enhance

opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. Funds are used to provide helpful additional support and enrichment. Leaders evaluate each aspect of the provision to ensure that funds are spent effectively.

- Sports funding has been used to employ qualified sports coaches to work with different year groups on a rotational basis. Specialist coaches also lead after-school sports clubs and run holiday courses. Extra funding has been secured to provide specialist physical education provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The money has also enabled school teams to participate in local tournaments. Participation rates in physical activities have increased because of such strategies.
- Parents are very positive about the way the school has improved over the last two years. Among their comments were: 'The school has improved massively over the last few years. Communication has improved, and parents are kept up to date with everything' and 'The current leadership is doing a fantastic job in ensuring that the school is always moving forward while maintaining a high standard of teaching and care.'

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors share the ambition to ensure that all pupils do well. They have a good range of expertise, including experience in education and social care. Governors share the responsibility of holding leaders to account with the regional director of the trust. The director plays a significant role in monitoring the work of the school and provides an objective view on the progress of leaders in driving improvements.
- Individual governors take a lead in keeping informed about aspects of the provision, including safeguarding, the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and sports. They visit the school regularly to gain first-hand information. Subject leaders are invited to governors' meetings to update them, with a strong focus on the impact of current initiatives.
- The headteacher's termly reports provide governors with a comprehensive overview of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. Governors review their own effectiveness in, as one commented, '... [ensuring] that we are more proactive than reactive'.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The strong culture and ethos around safeguarding and keeping children safe are embodied in the relationships between leaders, staff, pupils, and parents.
- All staff are trained in safeguarding and regular updates are communicated to staff via a 'day book' in the staffroom, weekly staff bulletins and staff meetings. External updates on safeguarding issues are also circulated to staff on a weekly basis. New staff receive comprehensive safeguarding training on arrival at the school.
- Safeguarding is a standing item on the agenda of the weekly meeting of the senior leadership team and 'children causing concern' is a standing item at every staff meeting.

- The designated safeguarding leads, special educational needs coordinator and family support worker work closely together. They provide immediate updates for staff on changes to legislation and safeguarding practice. Leaders alert staff at particular times of the year when children are known to be most at risk.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Pupils respond positively to the high expectations of behaviour, underpinned by the warm relationships that permeate the school. They have positive attitudes to learning because the teachers engage and motivate them and successfully encourage pupils to believe in themselves. Pupils' mature attitudes are evident, for example, during their discussions in pairs or small groups.
- Pupils rise to the challenges routinely presented across the year groups. Because teachers are aware of pupils' various starting points, they set tasks with an appropriate degree of challenge. Where necessary, pupils are well supported by, for example, extra help from teachers and support staff, with resources tailored to pupils' specific needs.
- The most able pupils are, for the most part, successfully encouraged to develop a deeper understanding. For example, during a mathematics lesson, the teacher explained to a more able group that they would not be 'going over old ground'. They responded well to the challenge of constructing accurate pie charts using protractors, as other pupils covered the same topic at a more basic level. Occasionally, not enough emphasis is given to deepening pupils' understanding and applying their newly acquired skills before moving on to another topic.
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge enables them to use questions successfully to draw out pupils' knowledge and extend their understanding. Skilful questioning features in most lessons. Teachers encourage pupils to think deeply, with remarks such as 'Can you tell me more?', 'Who agrees?' and 'Can you put that another way?' They encourage pupils to learn from mistakes. This means that teachers are confident that pupils will not be immediately put off if they are challenged.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. They are well briefed and are confident enough to use their own initiative. For example, by clearly demonstrating and reinforcing the use of appropriate mathematical vocabulary. Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is highly effective.
- Teachers mark work in line with school's policy. Pupils value feedback. Older pupils, for example, said that teachers' comments helped them to improve their writing. They appreciated the time allowed at the beginning of lessons to reflect on their previous work.
- Good headway has been made in improving the quality of teaching in reading. Pupils in each year group have recently begun to study more challenging texts. Leaders are aware that inconsistencies remain in teachers' expertise in using these texts to extend pupils' vocabulary and skills in drawing inference.
- Pupils' writing is improving quickly due to teachers' skills in motivating them through appealing tasks, such as writing news reports and horror stories. Teachers successfully emphasise the importance of spelling, punctuation, and grammar during such

activities. The attention teachers give to these skills where pupils are writing in other subjects, such as history and geography, is not consistently reliable.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. School leaders know pupils well and have introduced effective strategies to meet their, and their families', needs.
- Vulnerable pupils and those with complex needs are looked after with great care and attention. The inclusion manager, special educational needs coordinator and family support worker liaise very effectively.
- There is an effective no-tolerance approach to bullying, racism and poor behaviour. Pupils are very positive about this and appreciate the benefits to their learning this brings.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school's attention to their children's development and welfare. Their comments included: 'If there are any concerns, someone is always on hand to help resolve issues... I could not ask for anything more from them, they go above and beyond' and 'Everyone at the school is working very hard to improve the overall well-being and educational development of all pupils. I am happy with the support, both emotional and educational that my children receive.'

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well. They respond well to the school's highly-supportive environment.
- During lessons, pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute to the good progress they make. They sustain attention and are keen to learn. Pupils try hard and their pride in their achievements is evident from the increasing efforts they make to present their work neatly and attractively.
- Pupils are polite and courteous within the school's calm and purposeful atmosphere. Boys and girls play happily together and move around the school in an orderly fashion.
- Pupils were very positive about behaviour. They said behaviour had improved considerably over the last two years. Older pupils made insightful comments about the next steps. They suggested that some of their peers needed to take more responsibility for their own behaviour, rather than rely on adult guidance.
- As a result of significant personalised interventions, reward systems and incentives, absence is reducing, and punctuality is improving. The pastoral team, including learning mentors, works closely with external agencies to support parents in ensuring that their children attend regularly.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- In recent years, outcomes have been typically below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Typically, pupils were not making enough progress after they moved into Year 1. This was due, not least, to the frequent changes of teachers. In more than one year group, pupils had three teachers in the same year. This resulted in many gaps in pupils' learning and considerably constrained their achievement.
- As a result of consistently effective teaching over the last two years, current pupils are making good progress. The school's comprehensive assessment information shows that pupils are building well on their starting points, although a legacy of weak teaching has left gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills. However, attainment is rising due to accelerated progress and more pupils are working at the standards expected by the end of each key stage. The school's meticulous tracking indicates this is more evident in mathematics than in English.
- The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check have improved, with the proportion reaching the expected standard now broadly average. This represents good progress from when pupils left Reception. As pupils in Years 1 and 2 read to inspectors, they could retell the story and predict what happened next.
- Across key stage 2, pupils draw on their wider reading in their written work. For example, they include literary devices and use increasingly complex and descriptive sentences. Since the introduction of more challenging texts, pupils in key stage 2 are improving their comprehension skills, although some find difficulty in drawing inference from texts.
- Pupils' improved handwriting skills are apparent in their written work in their 'combined studies' workbooks. They take pride in presentation, although some have a limited vocabulary and lack confidence in using their secure spelling, punctuation and grammar skills in different contexts.
- Good progress in numeracy is evident from pupils' workbooks. These show pupils' growing confidence in applying basic number skills to solving problems. An increasing proportion of pupils is working at a greater depth in mathematics and pupils can explain their reasoning and mental strategies. For example, the most able pupils in Year 6 confidently described how fractions, decimals and percentages are interrelated.
- The school's assessment records show pupils are making good progress in science. This was evident in their well-presented workbooks. These record many practical activities and show pupils' increasing scientific skills, such as predicting, investigating, and drawing conclusion.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are making at least similar progress to other pupils. They are among the highest achievers, indicating the effectiveness of the school's provision.
- In recent years, there was a significant difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils. This gap is now diminishing, due to well-targeted support, underpinned by pupils' increased motivation and self-belief.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good headway alongside their classmates due to effective support.

## Early years provision

## Outstanding

- A large proportion of children start early years with communication and language skills well below those typical for their age. Most children make rapid progress from low starting points. This includes those from vulnerable groups.
- Children enjoy learning and develop a fascination in learning about themselves and others. They respond enthusiastically to the highly effective teaching. Adults have high expectations, based on careful observations and assessment. During a very effective lesson, small groups of children were fully engaged in number activities led by teachers and support staff. They were learning about odd and even numbers and how to double and halve numbers. 'Let's try doubling five,' suggested one child; another explained, 'We can't cut nine in half.'
- Children behave very well. They soon learn school routines and adults successfully encourage them to develop confidence in pursuing their own ideas. Children are encouraged to become inquisitive and to persevere when completing tasks.
- Through a wide range of helpful activities, adults take every opportunity to extend children's language and understanding. For example, children were eager to share their role play in the 'veterinary surgery', comparing the weight of the soft-toy 'pets' being 'treated'.
- Adults promote children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development very effectively. A strong emphasis is placed on respecting and celebrating differences and understanding diversity. Children learn well about right and wrong and are taught to follow rules and, in doing so, respect people and property.
- Adults encourage children to understand that their actions have consequences. Children develop good social skills; they play and work well together and understand the importance of teamwork. All staff are appropriately trained in how to ensure that children are kept safe. Children learn about risk through physical activities, including construction, climbing, and balancing.
- Parents value the attention adults give to ensuring their children's welfare. They contribute to initial and ongoing assessments. Parents speak highly of the provision and how well their children thrive in Reception. Among parents' comments were: 'We are very pleased. She was made very welcome and is learning English quickly' and 'My child is bright and is challenged.'
- The effective work of the early years leader, who is also responsible for Year 1, supports children's induction well, and promotes continuity in their learning. Leaders' accurate picture of children's strengths and weaknesses supports helpful staff training and development of the provision. The positive ethos and sense of common purpose leaders promote supports children's success extremely well.



## School details

Unique reference number	138372
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10040928

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gareth Owen
Headteacher	Stieve Butler
Telephone number	0118 9375562
Website	<a href="http://www.meadowparkacademy.org">www.meadowparkacademy.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@meadowparkacademy.org">admin@meadowparkacademy.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	13–14 January 2016

## Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average and about a third of the pupils speak English as an additional language. Pupils come from a wide range of different backgrounds.
- Almost half of the pupils are from disadvantaged backgrounds, which is twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The early years education is provided in two Reception classes and children attend full time.
- The school became a sponsored academy in 2012 and is part of the CfBT Schools Trust.
- The headteacher joined the school on a temporary basis in September 2016 and took up the permanent appointment the following September. Before that, the school had

been led by a succession of headteachers over a short period.

- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

## **Information about this inspection**

- Inspectors observed activities in all year groups. Observations were undertaken with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body and had discussions with the regional director of the trust.
- Meetings were also held with pupils to discuss their views on their learning and well-being, and with parents to gain their views about the school.
- Inspectors met pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 to discuss their reading. They talked to pupils at breaktimes, in lessons, and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including information on pupils' performance across the school, improvement plans, leaders' evaluation of teaching and learning, and curriculum plans.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of books to see what progress had been made across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors took account of 30 responses to the Ofsted parent survey, Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Rob Crompton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Marshall	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Martin	Ofsted Inspector

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