

The Meriton Education and Support for Young Parents

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108908
Local Authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	337175
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Mick Megee

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

The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	0–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	NA
Headteacher	Carol Bowery
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2007
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Age group	0–19
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision**

**Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited four lessons, and held meetings with members of the management committee, staff, groups of pupils and parents. He observed the centre's work and looked at students' work, centre policies, external reports and five parental questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the centre's work, looking in detail at the following:

- How well the centre deals with any identified underachievement.
- How effectively the centre maintains and improves high attendance.
- How effectively the centre ensures high quality provision and student outcomes at post-16.

Information about the school

The centre, known as the Meriton, provides education and support for young mothers, as well as for their babies, who attend the on-site registered childcare provision. There are no children above the age of three currently attending this provision. Students aged 11 to 16 attend full time and there is extended provision for those over 16, who attend for 12 hours per week. The Meriton admits students from across the city of Bristol as well as from neighbouring local authorities.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Meriton very successfully achieves its aim of providing young women and their babies with outstanding care, education and support. The young women join the centre at a critical time in their lives, often in need of significant personal support to prevent them from being overwhelmed by their circumstances. Many have a history of poor attendance at school with significant gaps in their education. The Meriton does an excellent job in helping the students to turn around their personal and academic situations. As one described it, 'Before I came here, I was at breaking point and completely out of routine. I doubted myself and I was thinking 'Let's not bother'. Then I got here. I was encouraged. Learning became fun.'. Almost all students go on to take up higher education or to begin worthwhile careers, often in fields related to child development. Attendance rockets, at least for many, and is good overall.

The key to the success of the Meriton lies in the positive ethos engendered through the vibrant leadership of the headteacher and her team. The young women are immensely reassured by the very high quality education and care that are available to their babies in the on-site nursery. This means that they are able to settle down to planning their future lives and to achieving their full potential in the secure knowledge that their children are playing and learning happily a few rooms away. Students and staff respond to each other with gentleness, respect and kindness. Pastoral and academic support is non-judgemental, always positive and tailored very well to each student. This individualised support is based securely on frequent, accurate, formal and informal evaluations of the student's progress to date. Students are fully involved in this process, for example by writing down the next steps they need to take every time they have received a marked assignment.

The headteacher ensures that all the staff participate in evaluating the work of the centre through collaborative exercises such as the audit of key skills and community cohesion. The Meriton is a very effective learning community that has outstanding capacity to improve because its agenda for development is absolutely rooted in accurate self-evaluation. This has already brought about significant positive changes, for example, in the nursery curriculum and in the introduction of academic reviews. Teaching is of high quality in the nursery, secondary department and at post-16, and has resulted in outstanding academic progress in most subjects, particularly in English. The centre has correctly identified that teaching in mathematics, although effective, is not yet as strong as in English. As a result, progress in that subject is not quite so rapid. The centre has obtained expert advice about what improvements are necessary and is introducing new strategies this term. Outstanding leadership within the centre has ensured that it has continued to go from strength to strength. This is the third

consecutive inspection in which it has been judged outstanding. Although the centre receives good support from the local authority through the experienced school improvement partner, the management committee is under-strength and does not yet provide fully effective challenge and critical support to the leadership team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching in mathematics by ensuring that the planned improvements in the schemes of work, teaching strategies and resources are fully implemented during the next two terms.
- Bring up to strength and extend the role of the management committee so that by the end of the year it is providing the senior leadership team with more effective challenge and critical friendship.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Almost all the young women join the centre with a fractured history of education that often includes lengthy maternity leave. It is hardly surprising then that standards are below average. However, the outstanding academic and personal progress that the students make once at the centre means that achievement is good overall. The individualised attention students are given means that their learning takes off spectacularly, and they each become hungry to gain skills and understanding. In their examinations, almost all students gain good and often outstanding results, although mathematics results are not yet up to those in English. There is no discernible difference in the achievement of the different ethnic, ability or age groups at the centre.

Attendance soars because the young women have a place to come to where their babies are given first-class care and education, and where they themselves feel valued and respected. There is some absence but almost all is for medical reasons or for maternity leave. The young women's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Any behavioural difficulties completely disappear as they enthusiastically step up to meet the challenge of their new parental responsibilities with seriousness and take an increasingly positive view of their future and their children's future.

Relationships in the classroom are extremely positive as students cherish the advice and guidance the teachers given them. Students show real care and concern for each other and for the staff throughout the day. They develop a very strong sense of what is right and wrong. They are unafraid to voice their opinions and always do so in a calm and reasoned way. They show not only tolerance but also appreciation of their different faiths and beliefs. For example, during the inspection, one student was telling her non-Muslim friends about her experience of Ramadan. Her friends listened with great interest, and one of them said, 'I'm going to try Ramadan myself next year!'

Students say how safe they feel and how they trust the staff fully to look after them and to look after their babies who are always in earshot. The students' own children benefit from the skilful care and teaching they are given in the nursery, where they make outstanding developmental progress. The young women take on board the copious,

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

friendly advice about how to stay healthy and how to keep their children healthy. Professionals from health agencies and from organisations such as Brook pay regular informal visits to the centre, providing further timely and welcome guidance.

The young women are very keen to take up opportunities to help in the local community, for example, by working with local senior citizens as part of their health and social care programme. The students rapidly accumulate all the necessary skills they will need for the next stage of their lives. They make outstanding progress in the basic skills of numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology. They undertake work experience in a very wide range of settings, including hotels and nurseries. They attend interesting college courses, for example, in health and beauty, car mechanics and home maintenance.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have skilfully developed just the right balance of guidance, positive feedback and sensitivity to give the students the self-confidence to develop as independent learners. There are plenty of brisk and focused, practical activities that engage the

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

students, especially those new to the centre, and make learning enjoyable. As one new student said, 'This is my first full day at school for two years. I came in here today and I didn't have a clue about any of this. Now I've got a clue. And I can't believe how fast the day's gone.' Teachers are innovative and flexible in choosing activities and use daily assessment extremely well to work out the stage that students have reached and what they need to do next. Within the very small groups, individual needs are explored meticulously by the staff. Relevant individual targets for priority skills, such as literacy and numeracy, are set and regularly reviewed alongside the students. Students are constantly encouraged to write down their own next steps so that they can take increasing control of their own learning. If they need extra tuition, this is given after school.

The curriculum is innovative, very rich and tailored very well to the needs and aspirations of each student. Students say, 'If there's something you really want to do, the headteacher will find a way and make sure it happens.' The centre has forged strong links with other local education providers to extend its offer even further. For example, last year students attended lectures on law at a local university. Staff give the young women excellent personal support that allows them to navigate their way carefully through this complicated period of their lives. One typical student's comment was, 'When you come here, they're like your friends. They show you anything and everything: how you can get it. Whenever you're struggling, they encourage you and support you.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Through three successive inspections, senior staff have demonstrated tremendous leadership by their absolute commitment to ensuring that the young women and their children receive excellent support and guidance, highly effective teaching, and a rich and varied curriculum. As a result, the young women are challenged to achieve as highly as they can, despite the often difficult circumstances in which they find themselves. Excellent management systems are in place to enable this to happen. There is intensive tracking of each student's attainment and very accurate monitoring of students' learning. Even though there are relatively small numbers, results are analysed to see if there is any variation between ethnic or age groups. Senior staff regularly monitor lessons, in both the school and the childcare provision, and areas for development are

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clearly identified. These very efficient processes enable the centre to identify very clearly its overall priorities and to continue the relentless drive for improvement. The headteacher has a very ambitious vision for the students, as articulated by one of the students, 'The headteacher aims as high as possible. She doesn't push anybody aside. She has high hopes for everyone, encourages them and makes it happen.'

Safeguarding procedures are very robust, and equality is promoted and discrimination tackled assiduously. The school promotes community cohesion extremely well with regular audits coupled to dynamic planning. There are some exceptional outcomes within the school and the local community. For example, the students very effectively undertake their sports leadership programme in a special school for children with physical difficulties. The management committee is currently under-strength, with infrequent representation from the local authority. This means that the committee, while operating satisfactorily and ensuring that statutory requirements are met, is not yet fully effective in holding the centre to account or in providing support and challenge.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

There is very high quality provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and, as a result, outcomes for children are outstanding. Staff in the registered childcare provision work exceptionally well in partnership with the young mothers, who attend lessons in the same building, to ensure their children's individual needs are fully met. There is full compliance with the requirements for registration. There are very effective settling-in procedures to ensure that there is little disruption to learning for both

mothers and children. The babies and toddlers are given frequent cuddles and this helps them to feel very much at home. The mothers speak very highly of the nursery staff. They say how well the 'key person' system works in practice and that they feel very assured that their children are being cared for in a loving and warm environment.

There is an excellent range of activities and resources that enables the children to make outstanding progress across the areas of learning and development. They become increasingly coordinated as they begin to feed themselves. Babies who are mobile explore their immediate environment with increasing curiosity and enjoy investigating musical and pop-up toys. These simple activities provide an excellent foundation to support the children's future learning.

Staff have a very clear understanding of the learning and development requirements in the framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and this enables them to maintain and broaden each child's learning in all areas with confidence. Leadership and management in the provision are highly effective and a number of impressive innovations have been introduced. For example, the team leader has recently re-vamped the system for planning and assessment so that it fully involves the children's parents. Staff build up a full picture of each child's achievement and progress through incidental observation and other more focused monitoring. Assessment information is used very well to adjust the activities provided and to address any gaps in learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

The leadership and management of the post-16 provision mirror the excellent leadership that is evident throughout the Meriton. The quality of students' learning and progress is outstanding overall. Teaching is well paced and challenging and offers the students many enjoyable individualised opportunities for learning. Staff give the young women frequent, very effective feedback in order to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. The outstanding curriculum for post-16 students builds on the equally good one found in the rest of the centre. There is a strong focus on child development, work-related skills and college preparation, and students have a choice of a good number of different curriculum pathways matched well to their capabilities and aspirations. The centre makes strong links with support agencies, colleges and work-experience providers. As a result, outstandingly good arrangements are in place for students to receive the guidance and experiences they need to prepare them and

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

their babies for moving on to the next stage in their lives. High quality care, guidance and support enable the young women to make good decisions about their own and their children's futures.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents returned questionnaires. Those who did were all positive. Comments included expressions of parents' pleasure at having their daughter at the centre. A very small number of questionnaires raised a concern about the provision of home-centre transport. The inspector judged this to be beyond the control of the centre.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at the Meriton to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspector received 5 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 49 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	3	60	1	20	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of the Meriton Education and Support for Young Parents, Bristol BS2 0SZ

May I say thank you for being so welcoming to me when I inspected the Meriton recently. You told me what an excellent job the centre does and how much you feel the staff support and care for you and your children. My inspection shows that you are absolutely right and that the centre is outstandingly good.

These are the things I found.

- The teaching is of high quality and the curriculum is very rich and broad so that you and your children make exceptional educational progress.
- You receive excellent care, support and guidance and this helps you and your children to make terrific progress in your personal development.
- The leadership and management are excellent so that the centre goes from strength to strength.

Although most things about the centre are positive, I have asked your headteacher and staff to do a couple of things to make it even better

- The centre should help you to do even better in mathematics. The staff have already taken advice on how to manage this and should put this advice into practice as soon as possible.
- The management committee should provide senior staff with more challenge and support.

It was a great pleasure to meet you, and I wish you and your children every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mick Megee

Lead Inspector

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