

Inspection of Meath School

Brox Road, Ottershaw, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 0LF

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Meath School flourish. The values of 'talk, learn, grow' are at the heart of all that the school does. Every aspect of learning is centred around equipping pupils to become confident and independent communicators. As a result, they learn to overcome any barriers to learning, and they develop their resilience and motivation to succeed.

Pupils are happy and safe, and they enjoy being in school. They comment that 'everyone can have friends here'. They enjoy playing imaginative games together in the different outdoor play areas. Parents praise the school, with one comment summing up the views of many, saying, 'Meath is a truly special place'.

There is a purposeful buzz of learning around the school. Routines and expectations are well established. Lessons are active and engaging, and this helps pupils to focus on their learning. Because staff know pupils so well, they easily perceive when to intervene and prompt or when to allow a pupil to persist and achieve tasks independently. Pupils know that all staff have high expectations of them, and so they consistently behave exceptionally well. All staff recognise that behaviour is a form of communication. They skilfully enable pupils to learn strategies to self-regulate and take responsibility for their choices.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders say there are no limits to what pupils can learn. They have designed a highly ambitious and rich curriculum, which is closely matched to meet the individual needs of each pupil. In all subjects, leaders have carefully organised plans that set out what pupils will learn and when. The teaching of new knowledge and skills is thoughtfully sequenced so that it grows over time. Learning is organised so that pupils have time to consolidate and transfer their knowledge.

The harmonious collaboration between the therapy and education teams forms the core provision. This powerful blending of expertise means pupils receive a genuinely integrated curriculum. This combined staff team uses its rich specialist knowledge to plan, deliver and monitor learning. Therapy programmes are seamlessly intertwined throughout all lessons, and every pupil benefits from this enrichment. Where personalised adaptations or specialist equipment is required, this is put in place without delay. When needed, pupils are also provided with highly personalised communication aids. Skilled staff facilitate the use of a wide array of supported communication devices, such as speech generators. Visual support, Makaton signing, and the consistent use of symbols help pupils to be as independent as possible. Consequently, they thrive and make rapid progress in their functional and social communication. They are well prepared for their next steps in education.

Leaders have carefully constructed and established a unique systematic programme to teach reading. This three-part, phased approach allows pupils time to become

secure in the earliest stages of learning to read. Staff are well trained, so they adeptly identify any gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge. They precisely target teaching to address these, and pupils progress swiftly through the stages. When they are ready, they are taught how to recognise letters and articulate sounds. This sets them up well to progress on to more formalised approaches and to read books with growing fluency. Pupils enjoy these sessions, and they love to read. Many enthusiastically share their favourite books and retell well-loved stories.

Pupils have consistently positive attitudes to their learning. Carefully designed programmes help pupils to understand their emotions. They are taught to develop 'super skills' that grow pupils' confidence to independently carry out everyday tasks and activities. Pupils know that their voice is listened to and that they can make a difference. Older pupils were well prepared to participate in a respectful debate about gender stereotyping during a lesson. Weekly 'Journey around the Word' days immerse pupils in the culture and traditions of other countries. They learn about people from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Staff are proud to be part of this school. There is a distinctive collaborative ethos, and they feel well supported by leaders. The revised governance structure further strengthens lines of strategic oversight. Leaders receive support and challenge from those responsible for governance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders oversee thorough safeguarding processes. All staff are well trained. They are vigilant and work together as a team to keep pupils safe. They know the pupils and families extremely well.

Staff know about the risks that pupils may face. They report any concerns about a pupil's welfare promptly. Leaders work effectively with other professionals to make a difference for families and pupils. When pupils need help, leaders act swiftly and with tenacity.

Through the curriculum, pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including online. They are very clear about who the trusted adults are in school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	125478
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10241031
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Susan Gregory (Chair of Education Committee)
Principal	Majella Delaney
Website	www.meathschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 and 12 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Speech and Language UK communication charity.
- Meath provides for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. Some pupils also have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the principal, the director of education for the Speech and Language UK, senior leaders, therapy leaders, subject leaders, teachers, therapists, and teaching assistants.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the charity, including the chief executive officer of the Speech and Language UK and the chair of the education committee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum planning in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and outside during social times.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records and policies, speaking to staff and discussing this with pupils.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including school improvement documentation and governance minutes.

Inspection team

Jo Petch, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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