

Inspection of a good school: Meridian Primary School

Harbour Avenue, Comberton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB23 7DD

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 July 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils want to do well. They like their teachers and make friends. Pupils enjoy doing science experiments, trying new sports and performing. They are taught the full range of subjects. However, pupils need more help to ensure their learning clearly builds on what they know already. Some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are set work where expectations of what they can achieve are not high enough.

Pupils know which staff they trust most to help them. Pupils are confident staff will respond to safety concerns. However, a few pupils say that not all staff take bullying worries as seriously as they would like.

Pupils have mixed views about how good behaviour is. While some pupils do behave well, several pupils choose knowingly not to follow the school rules. Pupils notice that adults do not deal with pupils who misbehave in the same way. Pupils say misbehaviour often re-occurs.

Pupils are enthusiastic about taking part in extra-curricular clubs. They like going swimming, participating in sports competitions and having local trips and visitors in school. They have recently enjoyed sports day, a nature photography competition and a week dedicated to science and technology.

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

Leaders have recently revised their curriculum thinking. In every subject, they have considered how pupils should build knowledge systematically from the early years to Year 6. However, teachers are still getting to grips with putting these new plans into practice. The new curriculum is not fully working as intended. Some subject leaders have provided

some support, but others are less knowledgeable about the detail of what needs to be taught. This means that not all teachers get clear direction. In turn, this means that pupils are set work they can achieve with ease or that repeats existing knowledge. This is not the case in the early years. Here, staff are more expert, and teaching is carefully matched to children's needs and interests.

One area where pupils do achieve well across the school is reading. Leaders have prioritised reading in early years through use of a clearly structured phonics programme. Staff have had training to deliver this well. Younger pupils can read books with fluency and confidence. Few pupils fall behind and, if they do, they quickly catch up. Older pupils also read well, though some do not see reading in school as pleasurable.

Plans are in place that identify how pupils with SEND should be supported to access the curriculum. Some plans work well, but leaders do not check them regularly enough. Often, work for pupils with SEND lacks ambition or is not adapted well enough to meet their needs. Some staff highlight they do not have the skills or consistent support from some leaders to manage pupils with the most complex needs. These pupils often refuse to work. This has become accepted by adults. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could and are disengaged from learning. This sometimes leads to repeated challenging behaviours that staff are not confident in addressing.

Behaviour at this school is not as good as it should be. While poor behaviour is not widespread, staff and pupils are concerned it is not improving. Senior leaders have recently updated the behaviour policy. However, this is having limited impact on improving behaviour. Some pupils openly admit that, if they do not follow the rules, there is little or inconsistent consequence. Where staff insist on pupils following expectations, pupils do conform and are polite and respectful. However, these expectations are not applied universally. This is partly due to several staff not feeling adequately supported by some leaders when dealing with challenging behaviours.

Pupils are provided with a range of wider opportunities. These include a choir, visits to places of worship, specialist sports coaches and a range of visitors to school. Pupils enjoy an 'active science' week which includes team building activities. All pupils, including those with SEND, also take part in sports tournaments. Pupils learn how to have healthy lifestyles and to understand differences.

Many staff enjoy working here and are dedicated. However, some staff say that leaders do not consider workload or have not prioritised professional development.

Governors have recently reviewed their roles and responsibilities and are well equipped to hold leaders to account. Governors are ably supported by the local authority. Governors are clear on what needs to be improved at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have recently improved safeguarding practices in the school. Staff receive regular training. Procedures for reporting concerns are well understood by staff and responded to by leaders. Governors monitor safeguarding. Pupils are kept safe, yet leaders, on occasions, are not as timely as they might be in engaging with external agencies.

All appropriate checks are carried out on adults who work in the school. Staff understand whistle-blowing processes. Pupils are taught about how to stay safe online, about the dangers of drug abuse and knife crime. Visits from the police have reinforced these messages.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Expectations of behaviour are not consistently applied by staff. This means that some pupils do not follow school rules or disengage with their learning undeterred. Leaders need to ensure all staff have specific training to apply agreed high behaviour expectations confidently and consistently. Governors need to ensure leaders also manage behaviour consistently and check that leaders' actions demonstrably improve behaviour in class and at breaktimes.
- Ambitions for what pupils with SEND can achieve are sometimes too low. This means that some pupils with SEND, especially with the most complex needs, do not always achieve as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that staff have the required training and support to adapt learning activities for these pupils. This is so these pupils can successfully access the full curriculum.
- Teachers are not fully familiar with what key knowledge pupils need to know and when. This means sometimes pupils repeat learning or find the work too easy. Leaders first need to ensure they have a detailed understanding of their subjects. They then need to provide clarity to teachers of how knowledge builds within a subject over time to ensure pupils can gain new knowledge in the depth and detail intended.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2018.

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	110626
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10288428
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	216
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair of governing body	Mel Collins
Headteacher	Carole Etchie
Website	www.meridianprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 and 31 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provider.
- A separately registered before- and after-school club uses the school facilities.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, senior teachers, subject leaders, teachers and some support staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, science and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' workbooks, and spoke with teachers and support staff. The inspector also heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector met several members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector had three phone calls with the local authority's school

improvement partner. The inspector reviewed minutes of local authority meetings about the school.

- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's own self-evaluation information and the school development plan.
- The inspector looked at examples of support plans for pupils with SEND and also at behaviour reporting systems.
- The inspector looked at the arrangements for safeguarding, including the single central record of recruitment checks. The inspector spoke with leaders and staff about the systems and processes to support safeguarding, and the school's safeguarding ethos.
- The inspector considered the 88 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 49 free-text comments. The inspector also considered the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were 46 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. During the inspection, the inspector spoke to many pupils across the school.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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