

Inspection of a good school: Meopham Community Academy

Longfield Road, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0JW

Inspection dates:

30 April to 1 May 2024

Outcome

Meopham Community Academy continues to be a good school.

The Head of School is Thomas Waterman. This school is part of The Golden Thread Alliance, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The executive team responsible for this school are Sarah Jack (Executive headteacher) and Michele Sowden-Mehta (Senior school improvement lead). The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Garry Ratcliffe, and overseen by a board of trustees chaired by Philip Vander Gucht.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils relish being part of a caring school community. They trust adults to listen to them if they have any worries. The school has a low proportion of disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils are well supported with academic learning and nurturing pastoral care.

Pupils embody the school values of respect, integrity, responsibility, resilience, equality and aspiration. They behave well and feel safe to express themselves. This is evident in the school's approach to playtimes, where pupils enjoy a wide range of activities and opportunities. Pupils told us, 'I can take whatever I want out of the dressing up box, and people will be kind about it.'

The school's expectations for pupils' academic and personal development are high. Pupils work to rise to these expectations. They are enthusiastic to learn. Pupils spoke with passion to the inspector about the broad and rich learning experiences they enjoy. The residential are seen as pivotal experiences by pupils. As a result, they achieve well and understand how to be positive citizens in their school and local community.

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

The school has designed an interesting and well-ordered curriculum. It contains the key knowledge and skills it wants pupils to learn. Staff have identified and sequenced ambitious content for what pupils will learn by the end of key stage 2. For example,

historical concepts of chronology, community, and conflict concepts are gradually developed and revisited overtime, which supports pupils' transition to secondary school.

The school provides high-quality training for staff. Teachers use different resources to support learning, and this helps pupils to understand key knowledge, such as fractions. Staff routinely check what pupils understand before moving on to new content. Teachers are swift to identify pupils with SEND and learning for these pupils is expertly adapted. From Nursery onwards, pupils' needs are well considered. Staff use an individualised approach to ensure these pupils receive consistent and effective support. In English and mathematics, teachers design activities that sharply focus on the most important content for pupils to learn and remember. This supports pupils to achieve typically in line with the national average in key stage 1 and 2 assessments. However, in some foundation subjects, the tasks that pupils complete are not always linked closely enough to the precise knowledge identified in the curriculum. Consequently, pupils do not consistently learn and remember enough of the content over time.

Reading is a whole school passion. Children in Nursery benefit from a language-rich environment and skilled staff who broaden their vocabulary. Staff are provided with high-quality training. This supports them to closely follow a detailed and sequenced phonics programme which begins in Nursery and continues as children progress through the school. Staff check pupils' knowledge accurately and use this information to ensure that the books they read match the sounds they know. The school offers a culturally diverse and engaging selection of books for pupils to enjoy and have read to them. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the routine adult-led reading sessions and develop a genuine love of reading. As a result, pupils become fluent and accurate readers.

Pupils are polite and respectful. The school's values of resilience, equality, aspiration, respect, responsibility and integrity are at the heart of the approach to promoting positive behaviour. These values are taught explicitly from the earliest days in the Nursery. Pupils know and exemplify these in their behaviour around the school. This is consistently evident in lessons and during playtimes, where behaviour is positive and inclusive. Staff are swift and thorough at addressing any concerns, including the rare instances of bullying. The school works well to support the attendance of all pupils. This focus has been less effective for the low numbers of disadvantaged pupils and too many are persistently absent.

The trust and school work positively together to provide high-quality enrichment experiences for pupils. The range of carefully chosen opportunities includes the 'Golden Gala' and 'Golden Games', where pupils compete against others in the trust. In addition, there are visits to a variety of different places of worship. These opportunities develop pupils' sense of community and an understanding of diverse life experiences and beliefs. The school has high ambitions for inclusive education and is working to improve communications around this with stakeholders.

Leaders at all levels are reflective and passionate about providing a good education. Trustees and governors work well together and have recently had a renewed focus on communicating more effectively with parents and carers. Despite changes in staffing,

teachers appreciate the refreshed focus on training to develop their skills, which is helping them to support pupils' learning more effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some disadvantaged pupils do not attend school well enough. This means they miss vital learning. The school must continue to monitor this rigorously and focus on improving the persistent absence of these pupils.
- The design of activities in some foundation subjects need refining. This means that pupils' achievement in these subjects is inconsistent. The school should ensure that tasks are sharply focused on the key knowledge and skills they intend pupils to learn and remember over time.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2014

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136351
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10321937
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	467
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Philip Vander Gucht
CEO of the trust	Garry Ratcliffe
Headteacher	Sarah Jack (Executive headteacher) Thomas Waterman (Head of school) Michele Sowden-Mehta (Senior school improvement lead)
Website	www.meophamca.com
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has been part of the Golden Thread Alliance since January 2023.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the head of school, executive headteacher, chief executive officer and other members of the leadership team.

- The inspector also met with members of the local governing body and trustees from the multi-academy trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. The inspector also spoke to pupils in lessons and during play and lunchtime.
- The inspector considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school, the school improvement plan and minutes of governor and trustee meetings.
- The inspector gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspector reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector spoke to parents and considered their responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector took account of the views of staff through conversations and the responses to the online staff survey.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. The views of pupils were also considered through Ofsted's survey.

Inspection team

Toby Martlew, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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