

INSPECTION REPORT

THE MEADOWS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bitton, Bristol

LEA area: South Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 109010

Headteacher: Mrs Avis Ball

Reporting inspector: Robert Greatrex
19924

Date of inspection: 25-26 September 2000

Inspection number: 224523

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bath Road Bitton Bristol South Gloucestershire
Postcode:	BS30 6HS
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. Jane Abbey
Date of previous inspection:	July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school has 183 boys and girls aged between 4 and 11 years on roll and is slightly smaller than most primary schools. Although covering a wide range, pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average overall. The school has 29 pupils identified as having special educational needs, a proportion below the national average. The school serves the village of Bitton and the surrounding area, many parents choosing the school for its village 'feel' and because its size means there is a real 'family' atmosphere, and staff know the pupils particularly well.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Meadows is a good school. Pupils, particularly by the end of Year 6, achieve high standards. Teaching is good; a particular strength of the good rate of learning is how carefully pupils' work is assessed and this information used to plan the next task. The headteacher, staff and governors work well together. The school constantly strives to improve, particularly through the very careful way in which it evaluates everything it does and the clear plan for its future development. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards, particularly in English and mathematics, are high by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good.
- The school development plan is a very useful tool, used well to move the school forward.
- The school evaluates everything it does, and uses the information to enable it to improve.
- Parents are very supportive of the school, and there is a strong and growing partnership between home and school.

What could be improved

- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are low.
- The school curriculum and pupils' personal development are restricted by the lack of a space suitable for some of these activities.

The areas for improvement, already identified by the school, will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Good improvement has been made since the school was last inspected in 1996. Major rebuilding works have improved the school considerably, although a small canteen is still used for assemblies and physical education lessons and this restricts pupils' learning. Reports to parents are much clearer and more informative. Provision for design and technology and music is now much better, and fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Staff training, the use of coherent programmes of work, and a greater range of resources, have all contributed well. In information and communication technology, however, too little has been done. Although current plans are appropriate, little has been done since the last inspection and the provision is still unsatisfactory.

Given the clear leadership, good teaching and rigorous approach to self-evaluation, the school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	B	A*	A	B
Mathematics	A	A	A	B
Science	B	A	A	B

Key	
Very high	A*
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

The high standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained.

Standards reached by eleven-year-olds in the 1999 national tests were well above the national average and were above average compared to schools similar to The Meadows. Although there are no national comparisons yet available for 2000, the proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding the level expected shows a further improvement on 1999. Targets set for 2000 were exceeded in both English and mathematics. Current standards in class suggest that results in 2001 will maintain this high standard.

Standards reached by seven-year-olds in the 1999 national tests varied; high in writing, average in reading and below average in mathematics. Results in 2000 fell slightly. Inspectors judge current standards to be in line with national expectations for pupils of this age and represent good progress from their attainment levels when these pupils entered the school.

Work is generally of a good standard except in information and communication technology and in elements of physical education. In the former, the school does not provide the equipment nor the teaching necessary for pupils to reach the required standard. In the latter, the only space available for dance and gymnastics, the canteen, is too small. When a class is working in the canteen, for example, at any one time about half of the pupils have to sit out and watch because there isn't enough room.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are good. They are particularly good when the work pupils are given is challenging and interesting.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good, both in classes and around the school. Throughout the school, pupils co-operate and share equipment well.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good. The eldest pupils are eager to take responsibility and welcome the opportunity to help the smooth running of the school. They help the youngest pupils at play-time. Throughout the school, pupils generally work well together.
Attendance	Attendance levels are good; however, there is a relatively high number of holidays taken in term-time which disrupt these pupils' learning. Pupils are punctual and lessons start on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. All teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory or better. Half of the lessons seen were good and a further one fifth very good. Together, this represents a high proportion of teaching overall and is better than at the time of the last inspection, particularly in the proportion of very good teaching.

Throughout the school, teachers make very good use of on-going assessment, checking how well their pupils have done in one task and using this information to decide what they need to do next.

Teachers have clear lesson objectives, which enable both them and their pupils to be clear about what they are to do. Consequently, the lesson has a clear focus and pupils' learning is purposeful.

Where the teaching is very good, it is often because the teacher has excellent subject knowledge which enables explanations to the pupils to be clearer, particularly when pupils struggled to understand at first. The very good lessons are often characterised by more stimulating and thought-provoking discussions and tasks, to which pupils respond with lively interest and eagerness to learn.

Literacy and numeracy are both taught well. The teachers' knowledge and understanding are good. All elements of the national strategies for these lessons are taught effectively. Because of the good use of assessment, work is of the right level for pupils of all ability levels to make good progress in their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced, except for information and communication technology and elements of physical education. The provision for children under five is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The needs of these pupils are carefully assessed. Staff know their pupils' individual needs well, and work hard to meet them. Targets set in individual education plans are appropriate.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Pupils' social development is very good. Many worthwhile opportunities are given to pupils to become involved in the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils' moral development is very good. The school's expectations of how pupils will behave are regularly explained and reinforced. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of their own culture, and a growing awareness of other cultures. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, although the whole school cannot gather together. Assemblies and other opportunities meet statutory requirements despite the limitations placed upon the school by the lack of a hall.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall, pupils are looked after well. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory and all staff have received training. Very good use is made of assessment to make sure activities in lessons match pupils' individual needs and capabilities.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher gives the school a clear lead and educational direction. There is a sense of purpose to all that the school does, guided by the well-planned school development plan and strategic plan. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Co-ordinators give a good lead in their subjects and individual strengths are well used.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body is supportive of the school and keen to play both a practical and strategic role in its continued development. They work hard to involve and listen to parents before making decisions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. This is a strength in moving the school forward. The school analyses how it is doing in order to know how and where it needs to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Funds are used for the correct purpose and the school has begun to apply the principles of best value to all it does. Despite the limitations of the accommodation, the school uses its buildings well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They feel comfortable raising questions or problems with the school.• Staff have high expectations of pupils.• Pupils' behaviour is good.• The school works closely with them.• The teaching is good.• The school helps their children to become mature and responsible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents would like to see the range of activities outside of lessons increased.

Parents strongly support the school. The inspectors confirm the parents' generally positive comments about the school. In the one exception, parents would like to see the range and number of activities outside of lessons increased. The school already has plans to extend the range further, for example with judo and computer clubs, the latter once hardware is installed. Inspectors feel that, for a school of this size, the range is satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards, particularly in English and mathematics, are high by the end of Year 6.

1. Standards are high. In the 1999 national tests, results achieved by 11-year-old pupils were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science and above average when compared to schools similar to The Meadows. Results in 2000 show a further improvement, although there are no national comparisons available yet. Pupils make a very good start when they first join the school and this good progress is built to year-by-year as they move through the school. By the time they leave the school, they reach high standards.
2. In English, pupils can select information from a range of texts to form a view about the personalities of characters from 'Romeo and Juliet'. Many pupils use inference and deduction effectively. Their subsequent writing, particularly when they retell this story, is varied and interesting in the good range of styles they use. Pupils write using sentences well, often using longer descriptive ones linked with short action sentences to good effect. They organise their work in paragraphs and, when appropriate, chapters. They research for information well, using a wide range of sources and resources such as photographs and videos, and recognising the relative strengths of each resource. They recognise that an advantage of using a video to gather information is that the body language and posture can give them greater insight. Pupils listen carefully and respond well to the views and opinions of others. When speaking, however, although pupils clearly understand the main points of the discussion and what has been said, they themselves often speak in simple, repetitive sentences that do not sufficiently develop their thoughts or state their opinions.
3. In mathematics, the vast majority of pupils can move easily and accurately between improper fractions and mixed numbers, often doing the calculations quickly and successfully in their heads. They know, for example, that four-thirds is one and one-third. They can count aloud in fifths up to and down from 10. They know, understand and use correctly terms such as 'denominator' and 'numerator'.

Teaching is good.

4. The quality of teaching is good overall. All teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory or better. Half of the lessons seen were good and a further fifth was very good. This is an improvement on the last inspection and represents a high proportion of the total teaching observed.
5. The teachers' day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is used very well. Teachers use opportunities in the lesson accurately to evaluate pupils' levels of understanding. In a Year 5 mathematics review session, for example, the teacher used pupils' answers to her questions and explanations of what they had learnt to assess how much they knew so that she could plan the subsequent lesson.
6. Throughout the school, the teachers' clear learning objectives for each lesson are beneficial, both to teaching and learning. Because the teacher is so clear about precisely what the purpose of the lesson is, there is a clear structure to the lesson plan. When this was shared with the pupils, such as in Year 5 and Year 6, they knew what they should focus upon and as a result brought a strong sense of purpose to their work.

7. Where the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is particularly strong, the pupils' learning is at a quicker rate. In a Year 5 information and communication technology lesson, for example, the teachers' very good knowledge of spreadsheets enabled her to communicate this very easily to the pupils. When a small number of pupils struggled, the teacher's understanding enabled her to explain more fully so that they successfully understood the task. In a Year 4 music lesson, the teacher has the knowledge to be able to explain dynamics so that the pupils have a good understanding and can go on to explore this practically. Again, very good understanding enables him to explain the way that the beaters are held and the instruments are struck can have an effect.
8. Where lessons are particularly successful, it is often because the teachers provide very stimulating activities that spark pupils interest and enthusiasm to learn. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, the brisk delivery and lively, imaginative way in which tasks were presented to the pupils created a buzz of interest and enthusiasm for their number work. In a lesson in the Reception class, the teaching was equally challenging. The activities, and the way they were presented, encouraged pupils to think for themselves, and to use what they had learnt previously in a different situation.
9. Many teachers use their skills well to adapt their teaching to meet the class' needs, and so enable pupils to learn successfully. This was particularly evident with younger pupils, and those with relatively short concentration spans, where teachers recognised this and responded well. In Year 1, the teacher used role-play very effectively in a numeracy lesson introductory session, and a puppet equally successfully to renew interest and concentration in the review part of a literacy lesson.
10. Teachers generally use questioning well. Most teachers, such as in the introduction to a Year 2 lesson, draw all pupils into the discussion so that all are active participants. Teachers use thought-provoking questioning to challenge pupils to think again or more deeply, and learning is at a good rate.
11. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils, and this is very beneficial to pupils' learning. In a Year 3 physical education lesson, although the teacher was temporary, she had quickly established a good rapport with the pupils who listened closely and followed her instruction well.

The school development plan is a very useful tool, used well to move the school forward.

12. The school development plan is used very effectively to plan, action and evaluate the school's improvement. All staff and governors are involved and there is a real sense of everyone having a voice in the school's future, as well as a part to play in achieving it. The school is consequently aware of its strengths and relative weaknesses, and there is a clear sense of purpose. Where the school is less effective, it generally knows the reasons and is addressing them. Governors are full and active participants. The school increasingly canvasses parental views, too. The headteacher successfully manages to wed a collaborative, 'collegial' style with the need to get things done. Deadlines are not missed or extended. This strength of involvement and partnership ensures that everyone is fully committed and that things get done.
13. The school development plan responds effectively to the school's current position and changes are therefore the right ones. Plans are clearly influenced by the school's monitoring, particularly of teaching, learning and test results. Changes in how the literacy and numeracy strategies are taught, for example, originated from observations of teaching. Subsequent reviews by staff and governors determined what needed to be done and this was subsequently incorporated in the school development process.

14. An important and innovative aspect of development planning is the 'strategic plan'. This links 'goals' with 'targets' coherently, stating clearly what has to be done, by whom and at what cost. It is a useful summary of the main thrust of the next few years.

The school evaluates everything it does, and uses the information to enable it to improve.

15. The school uses evaluation very effectively. Although the school is fundamentally successful, there is no sense of complacency. Current successes and areas for improvement are carefully assessed through rigorous and thorough evaluation. Consequently, the school has a very clear idea of what is working and where it needs to make changes.
16. Once the need for change is recognised, action is swift. Key staff organise any necessary reviews. Proposed changes are carefully planned and incorporated into the school development plan. Crucially, the school does not stop there, and no assumptions are made regarding the changes. At an appropriate time, review and evaluation is undertaken to ensure that the expected improvement has occurred.

Parents are very supportive of the school, and there is a strong and growing partnership between home and school.

17. The school is working hard to develop the partnership between home and school. Parents, too, are keen to see this develop further. The school aspires to 'promote and maintain the highest level of co-operation and understanding between parents and teachers' and governors have introduced 'surgeries'. Although a recent innovation, these are much appreciated by parents who feel that they give an extra and useful link with the school. Governors have opened their formal meetings to parents, too, so that they can understand and also inform the decision-making process. Again, parents welcome this openness and the information gathered is useful both to the governing body and the headteacher.
18. Right from when parents first plan to bring their children to The Meadows, the school works closely with them. Parents welcome the careful and sensitive support given to their children when they first start school. They particularly appreciate the opportunity for a home visit, so that their child can be seen in her or his natural surroundings. They also appreciate how their views are listened to; for example, the changes the school has made to the induction process in response to parents' opinions.
19. The 'way forward', when parents work alongside their children in class, is an example of the excellent steps the school is taking to involve parents more. It is an important link between the home and school, and considered by parents as being extremely useful in enabling them to support their children out of school. This innovation enables parents to obtain firsthand experience of their children in school and the work they are doing. Consequently, parents are better able to show interest in their children's work and help and guide them if they need it.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are low.

20. Although the school's current plans are judged appropriate by the inspection team, standards in information and communication technology are nevertheless too low. Too little has been done in response to the last inspection.
21. There is too little hardware for the full curriculum to be taught, or for pupils to have the amount of practical contact to develop their skills and general competence sufficiently. Whilst some

classes are given appropriate tasks to do over a period of time, these are not always completed before it is time to move on. Whilst teaching gives pupils a good understanding, for example of spreadsheets in Year 5, most pupils are learning the theory without the immediate benefit of 'hands-on' experience. The lack of sufficient time and opportunity for pupils to use computers means those pupils not having access to computers out of school struggle and are not working at the appropriate level. Some Year 2 pupils, for example, use a mouse laboriously and struggle to position the cursor precisely over the icon they wish to use.

22. The school recognises these shortcomings and improvements to rectify them have been planned. Once these changes are made, these current deficiencies are likely to be met, although it will take pupils some time to build their skill levels.

The school's curriculum and pupils' personal development are restricted by the lack of a space suitable for some of these activities.

23. The lack of a suitable space for elements of physical education and whole school gatherings limits pupils' progress in them.
24. The school is unable to include elements of the physical education curriculum in its teaching, because there is no space large enough. The canteen is used as a hall. It is cramped with barely room for a class to sit down on the floor in sufficient space to exercise. Floor activities cannot be energetic, nor can exertion be sustained. After any warm up activity, half the pupils cool down as they wait for their turn, and this is potentially harmful. The small amount and range of apparatus that can be made available for gymnastic activities inhibits pupils' development. One or two forms and benches fill much of the space available and no fixed apparatus can be provided.
25. Although the school has created a strong sense of community, the pupils' personal development is adversely affected because of the limited space. The whole school cannot, for example, meet together. All pupils cannot participate simultaneously in an event such as a dramatic performance and share in the celebration and acknowledgement of the school as a community. Although standards in English are generally high, pupils have little experience of speaking to an audience in a large room.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

26. In order to build further on the good quality education provided by the school, the headteacher governors and staff should:
- ◇ raise standards in information and communication technology by:
 - providing sufficient hardware and software;
 - providing more planned opportunities for all pupils to use computers and develop their individual research skills;
 - auditing and meeting staff training needs.(paragraphs 20, 21 and 22)
 - ◇ continue to seek ways of providing a suitable space for pupils to experience the full range of the physical education curriculum and undertake activities as a whole school, when appropriate.
(paragraphs 23, 24 and 25)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	21	47	32	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	183
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	29

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	11	16	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	27	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	10	11
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	27	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	96 (100)	100 (100)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	10	18	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	9	10
	Girls	15	15	16
	Total	22	24	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79 (96)	86 (83)	93 (96)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	7	7
	Girls	15	15	14
	Total	22	22	21
Percentage of pupils	School	79 (96)	79 (74)	75 (65)

at NC level 4 or above	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	155
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.1
Average class size	26.4

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	58.0

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	363 862
Total expenditure	374 778
Expenditure per pupil	2 025.83
Balance brought forward from previous year	26 391
Balance carried forward to next year	15 475

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	185
Number of questionnaires returned	73

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	34	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	42	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	40	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	42	8	3	3
The teaching is good.	57	41	0	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	40	1	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	15	0	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	27	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	51	47	1	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	49	40	8	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	41	1	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	45	21	5	8