



The Meridian Primary

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110626
LEA CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278471
Inspection dates 6 February 2006 to 7 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. George Falconer LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Harbour Avenue
School category	Community		CB3 7DD
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01223 262423
Number on roll	296	Fax number	01223 263055
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Dr. Robert Crichton
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Chris Tuff

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 6 February 2006 - 7 February 2006	Inspection number 278471
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Meridian Primary School is a very popular community school. It serves Comberton and surrounding local villages, which make up a relatively affluent area of Cambridge. There are 296 children on roll and the vast majority start school with above average abilities. Due to the distribution of children within each year group, most children are taught in mixed age classes. The percentage of families applying for free school meals is very low compared to the national picture. While the number of children from minority ethnic groups is broadly average, the number whose first language is not English is low. Similarly, the number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities is much lower than the national average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The school demonstrates a good capacity to improve under the strong leadership of the relatively new headteacher and deputy headteacher, who receive effective support from the governing body. However, the school has rightly identified the need to improve the way in which subject leaders fulfil their role, so that inconsistencies in the school's performance can be rectified. Consequently, whilst the school considers that it provides a good quality of education, inspectors do not wholly agree. Children are well prepared for school life when they start but more could be done to enable them to attain even higher standards by the time that they leave. Although satisfactory overall teaching, learning and curriculum provision are inconsistent throughout the school. For example there is a marked difference between the two Foundation Stage classes and teaching is more effective in Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 1. However, attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 2 children's overall attainment remains above the national average overall but children make better progress in English than in mathematics and science. As a result, many more children attain above average standards in English than in the other two subjects. Their success in English demonstrates that they are capable of doing even better in mathematics and science. Nevertheless, from an above average starting point, children make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. They behave extremely well and their attendance is good. Children know how to keep safe and healthy and make an excellent contribution to the school community. Care, support and guidance offered to children are good overall, with the element of care being particularly strong. The school actively involves all who have an interest in its work and listens to their views. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure equality of opportunity for all children in the Foundation Stage, irrespective of which class they are in.
- Ensure that all lessons are taught to the same high standard so that the rate of progress is more consistent and even across the school and between subjects.
- Ensure subject leaders contribute more effectively to the schools work in raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory throughout the school and standards reached are above the national average. Children start school with highly developed skills in speaking and listening. Most are ready to read and write and have above average abilities in relation to mathematics. They build on this good start and make satisfactory progress to exceed standards normally expected at the end of the Reception year. Satisfactory progress is maintained in Key Stage 1 in English, mathematics and science so that

standards achieved remain above average. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards vary considerably between subjects. Children make satisfactory progress in science and mathematics and attain standards which are above the national average. However, standards and achievement are much better in English. Whilst most meet the targets that the school sets for them, higher attaining children do better in English than in mathematics and science. Indeed, the number of children exceeding national expectations in English is well above that in similar schools nationally. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of learners, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from particular ethnic groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Children's attitudes and behaviour are extremely good. Because most children really enjoy school, attendance is above average. Spiritual, social and cultural development is also of a high order. Children are sensitive to the world around them. Their understanding of right and wrong is extremely strong and they make positive contributions to the community by willingly supporting others. Children's involvement in a wide range of festivals, opportunities to study languages and chances to visit interesting places promote cultural development successfully. Children have excellent awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They understand the importance of regular exercise and eating a balanced diet. The school council works well because it gives children a genuine 'voice' in matters of school improvement. Children's experience of voting for school council members has helped them to develop citizenship skills. They contribute to the wider community by helping others through fund raising for charities. Their acquisition of secure basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) lay firm foundations for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are good, and very good, elements in teaching and learning throughout the school but good practice is not applied consistently. Because relationships are very good and discipline throughout the school is effective, most lessons run smoothly. Teaching is at its best when teachers are enthusiastic, have high expectations and build rapidly on children's skills and knowledge. The pace in some lessons is brisk and resources are used well to promote children's interest. However, in other lessons, activities are mundane and do not inspire children to give their best. For example, some teachers rely too heavily on worksheets. This limits the children's opportunity to think, present their work for themselves, and build upon their basic skills, especially in writing. The recent initiative to use targets for writing is helping children to see how to improve their literacy skills. Indeed, the very good target-setting in Years 5 and 6 is motivating children well and successfully

involving them in evaluating their own progress. Some teachers use effective techniques to assess children's learning. They encourage children to discuss their work with each other in order to evaluate where they have done well and where they need more help. Other teachers make good use of questioning to draw out the children's understanding and provoke thought. However, some teachers do not regularly engage children in these highly successful activities and, as a result, progress is faster for some children than others. Furthermore, the use of marking to help children understand what they need to do next to improve their work is not robust enough to raise standards throughout the school. Similarly, the inconsistent use of homework limits the school in its capacity to ensure children in different classes progress at an even rate and have comparable learning experiences.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides its children with a satisfactory curriculum and there are very good opportunities for them to engage in a range of activities outside normal lessons, particularly in music and sport. These activities promote enjoyment in learning and healthy lifestyles. The curriculum for Foundation Stage children is satisfactory overall, providing children with an acceptable range of activities. However, children taught in the mixed reception and Year 1 class do not have the same opportunities as those taught in the single-age reception class, particularly in relation to choosing activities independently, developing their interpersonal skills and taking responsibility for their equipment. The school's work to link subjects so that learning is more meaningful for children is sound and particularly good links are developing between ICT and history. Children's progress in art and design is good because the school is utilising the expertise of staff effectively. Modern foreign languages are provided in Key Stage 2. This contributes well to the school's provision for cultural development and is much appreciated by children and parents alike. The school places great emphasis on the children's personal, social and health education. The work done in this respect is highly effective and prepares children very well for life in the community and for the world of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect of the school's work is good. Arrangement for ensuring children are safe is very good, while guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Staff address health and safety requirements conscientiously. Risk assessments are rigorous and regular health and safety monitoring is carried out. Child protection procedures are efficient and checks on staff are thorough. Playground supervision is effective, with good support from play assistants to encourage constructive play, particularly for younger children. Children know who to turn to if they have a problem and older children are keen to help younger friends. There is good support for vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. New children are welcomed and helped to settle quickly. Parents are positive about the quality of and support for children.

Academic guidance is less well developed and is not yet consistent or coherent across the school. Some children know their literacy targets, but are not clear about how to improve in other areas. The school is keen to take children's opinions into account and the School Council works well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good because the new headteacher is already making a difference. Her work is improving teaching and learning. She has particularly good skills in leadership. She works hard and has a clear vision for the school, which is articulated well in the school development plan. With the very positive support of the governing body, she has created a comprehensive plan for improving children's progress as they move through the school and for securing even higher standards by the end of Year 6. In her relatively short term in office, the headteacher has worked with the recently appointed deputy headteacher and senior management team to improve management systems. She has identified the importance of improving the school's ability to monitor and assess its own performance accurately. Consequently, systems for checking on standards and quality are more robust in meeting the needs of all children and give the headteacher a very good understanding of the areas for development. As a result, her key priorities for the school are entirely appropriate and are beginning to impact positively on children's progress. This is a major factor in the school's good capacity to improve. Nevertheless, senior managers recognise the need to enable subject leaders to fulfil their roles better and thereby make a more significant contribution to the school's work on raising standards. Parents' views are actively sought. The majority of parents show confidence in and positive support for the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to thank you for your warm welcome and for helping us with the inspection of your school. We were delighted with the way you got on so well together and showed enthusiasm for the lots of good things that happen. You are kind and polite to each other and to the teachers and other adults in school. You showed us how you can be very responsible in the way you carry out jobs in school such as the School Council work and being play leaders. From what you told us, school is a good place to be and you really do enjoy working there and playing with your friends. We were very pleased with some of the work you were doing in class and it was clear to us that you are very keen and very able. You really do like learning. You work hard in lessons and our view is that you can work even better and learn lots more. We think you are lucky to be able to learn another language at primary school and this should prepare you well for college. It's good to know that you also enjoy the lunchtime and out of school activities. You realise the importance of being healthy through regular exercise and learning about healthy eating and the school works really well to teach you about those ideas. The headteacher and all staff care for you very much and they want to do the best they can so that you will be even better prepared when you move to the next class and eventually to college. Children in the Reception classes are going to be doing the same things as each other and the headteacher has some very good plans and ideas for all children. Mrs Tuff is very keen to make sure that the work you are given, including your homework, is the right work for you and she will be working hard with your teachers to share those ideas. I wish you all well for the future and I know that you are all going to enjoy working hard and achieving as much as you can together.