



# Meryfield Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117184  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280007  
**Inspection dates** 6 March 2006 to 7 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Peter Lewis LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Theobald Street
<b>School category</b>	Community		WD6 4PA
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8953 2106
<b>Number on roll</b>	235	<b>Fax number</b>	020 8953 8768
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. John Cooper
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 March 2004	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Margaret Conlon

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 6 March 2006 - 7 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 280007
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is located in an established residential area of Borehamwood and takes children from age 3 to 11. It has experienced considerable difficulties over the past four years since it was first identified as causing concern. Although numbers have fallen, the school is about average in size, with 235 pupils on roll who come from a range of social backgrounds. When children are admitted to the Nursery class, their attainment is often below average. There are above average levels of pupils entitled to free school meals and this number is rising. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average but there is a larger than average number who are identified with learning difficulties and disabilities. Most pupils in the school come from White British families although the proportion who do not speak English at home is above average, and has risen considerably over the last two years. An increasing number of pupils move in or out of the school at times other than the usual admission or transfer points.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

This is a rapidly improving school that provides pupils with a satisfactory education and which looks after their personal well-being effectively. The appointment of the acting headteacher at the start of this academic year heralded a fresh start after a significant period of instability. As a result, the school no longer poses any cause for concern because of the effectiveness of strategies introduced to secure improvement. The school views itself as satisfactory and the inspection team agree. Parents and pupils think the school is doing a good job and, as a result, the school's popularity in the community is growing. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and the school has tackled all the issues from the last report. The value for money is satisfactory. Because of weaknesses in planning and leadership, children in the Nursery and Reception classes have made inadequate progress from a very low starting point. The school's decisive action to remedy this has already made a difference although the changes made have yet to impact fully on children's learning. The recent improvements to teaching and the curriculum mean that pupils in the rest of the school now make progress that is consistently at least satisfactory so that standards in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science are now just below average. Across the school, achievement is satisfactory and this demonstrates considerable improvement, particularly in English and mathematics. The school is now working hard to improve its performance further in these subjects by ensuring that teachers make more consistent use of assessment in planning pupils' work. The atmosphere in the school is very positive and all staff work very hard and to good effect to make every child feel valued. The views of staff, pupils and parents are sought and everyone is positive that their views are listened to and acted upon. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, although the leadership of the acting head teacher is particularly effective. Self-evaluation is good overall, as seen in the high quality of the self-evaluation form. The governors are well led, and so are able to support the school and take a full part in its development. The school works effectively with other local schools and organisations and the scope for further improvement is good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Fully implement plans to improve the quality of learning in the Foundation Stage classes to increase the rate of progress.
- Ensure that the good practice seen in some classes in assessment and in target setting is applied consistently across the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and disabilities and those whose first language is not English, make satisfactory progress over their time in school. From a below average starting point when they join the school, the children in Nursery and Reception make inadequate progress towards reaching the early learning goals that they are expected to attain by the end of Reception. As a result of decisive action

taken by the school, recent modifications to the curriculum have begun to improve the progress that children make, and the school has good evidence of its determination to continue this process. The school's performance in the national tests for pupils in Year 2 in 2005 had improved to just below average. This confirms the satisfactory progress they make in Years 1 and 2. The school's performance in the tests for children in Year 6 in 2005 was below average in English, mathematics and science. However, achievement is now satisfactory overall with elements of rapid progress particularly in Years 2 and 6. The school sets challenging targets for its performance and, although last year these were not met, assessment information indicates that the school will come closer to meeting them this year. The school had recognised that pupils, and particularly the faster learners, did not make as much progress as they should in writing. Pupils currently in Year 6 have a much better grounding in writing because of the improved teaching they have received this year and, as a result, are making much better progress. The school has already begun to improve its use of assessment but, although work is generally more closely matched to pupils' particular needs and abilities, the school recognises that inconsistencies remain.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. During the inspection, pupils in the school and in the playground showed real consideration and courtesy to each other and to adults. Since the acting headteacher's appointment, there has so far been only one fixed-term exclusion, compared with eight in the previous year, which demonstrates that significant improvements have been made in behaviour which is now good. Although attendance rates are lower than those found in most schools, attendance is average because the school is doing all it can to promote good attendance and discourage lateness. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons and also the good range of extra-curricular activities and clubs. Older pupils take part in the running of the school through the school council, and feel they have been able to improve, for instance, the range of playground games and the quality of the toilets. Pupils have a sound awareness of the need to stay healthy, for instance, through what they eat, and there are good opportunities for them to engage in physical activity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school places good emphasis on social development, and pupils also have a good awareness of the diversity of cultures both within the school and society outside. They also contribute to the wider community.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and in line with the school's own judgement. The acting head teacher has rightly identified the need to improve teaching as her highest priority. Teaching and learning are now monitored closely with the result that significant improvements have been made in a short period of time. These

improvements are motivating children to want to learn. In the best lessons pupils know what they are expected to learn and activities are well matched to their needs. In an outstanding lesson, pupils were inspired and enthused by teacher's secure command of the subject and the challenge to use expressive language in their work. Most teachers know their pupils well and exert firm but friendly control; pupils work productively as a result. In the minority of comparatively less effective lessons there was insufficient pupil participation, a lack of challenge, and too long spent listening to the teacher. Teaching assistants provide a good quality support that enables learners to achieve well. Although now improving, as a result of action taken by the school, teaching in the Foundation Stage is inadequate overall because of weaknesses in planning and, as a result, expectations are not sufficiently high. The school has made a good start on improving teachers' assessment of pupils' work. Teachers assess pupils' performance thoroughly and set clear individual targets in English and mathematics. However, the information gained from assessments is not yet consistently applied to match the needs of all learners.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is rightly judged to be satisfactory by the school. It is broad and suitably organised for the amount of time given to each subject. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements and is now well planned to meet needs of all pupils. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Appropriate attention has been given to building links between subjects. and teachers are developing effective cross-curricular links in literacy, mathematics and information communication technology (ICT). There are a good number of lunchtime and after school clubs, such as games, choir and chess clubs, that are well attended and enjoyed by pupils. The lunchtime ICT club provides good opportunities for pupils to extend their skills. The Foundation Stage curriculum, although very recently improved in planning, still has weaknesses in relation to the outdoor activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school cares well for its pupils. It has good procedures for child protection and carries out necessary risk assessments. Pupils feel safe in the school and know that there is an adult they can turn to if they are in difficulty. They feel that any problems with other pupils will be sorted out quickly, while acknowledging that this has not always been the case. The school promotes good behaviour and positive attitudes very well through an effective system of rewards, which is also reinforced in assemblies. Teachers set pupils individual or group targets in English and mathematics, which pupils understand. Most older pupils have a clear understanding of the level they have reached and what they need to do to improve but, because of differences in teachers' confidence in the use of assessment, this is not yet consistent through the school. The school acknowledges that it needs to continue to improve this aspect of children's education.

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## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting head teacher, governors and staff have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to carry on improving. They have a very good range of systems for checking the school's performance and accurately identify the school's ethos as one of its most significant strengths. This is confirmed by parents and pupils, who have consistently positive views. Governors are very well led by the chair and vice chair, and so are able to take a full and active role in setting the long-term direction for the school. Recent developments have seen teachers' understanding of the subjects for which they are responsible improve and this has helped them to become more fully involved in school improvement planning. While all those with leadership and management roles appreciate how the school has improved, they are far from complacent and have clear plans to make it even better, by making greater use of assessment and target-setting to track the progress of different groups for example. The key to the school's success is the leadership of the acting head teacher who, strongly supported by the leadership team, has taken strong action based on rigorous self-evaluation to secure improvement. The views of parents and pupils are actively sought. In the process, she has built a staff team who work closely together to turn their vision into reality. Given the improvements made over the last year, particularly the improvements in pupils' progress and the commitment of all those who work at the school, it is well placed to continue improving.

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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	4	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	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	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	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	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

You may remember our recent visit when we came to see you and your teachers working together. We enjoyed meeting and talking with so many of you. Thank you for all the help you gave us. We are writing to share with you what we found out about your school. We think you are lucky to go to such a safe and caring school, especially as all the staff and governors are interested in what you do and know you so well. We all thought you all behave and get on very well together and were really impressed with the very polite and grown-up way that you talked to us about your school and told us about the ways in which it has got better for you. We have asked your teachers to make sure that these improvements continue, and especially for the youngest children in the Nursery and Reception classes. You are working hard, particularly in English and mathematics. We have asked your teachers to work hard on finding new ways to make your lessons even more interesting and in providing work that is more challenging for some of you and to make sure that they always make clear to you what you need to do to make your work even better. We wish you well during your time at Meryfield Primary School and for the future.