

Meopham Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118570
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312997
Inspection date	1 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	421
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maurice Beeby
Headteacher	Martin Clinton
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2005
School address	Longfield Road Meopham Gravesend DA13 0JW
Telephone number	01474 812259
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects:

How well leaders and managers were improving provision and raising achievement and standards in writing.

To what extent pupils were applying and developing their writing skills in other subjects.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Meopham Community is a much larger than average primary school. Most of the pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is just below average. The nature of these includes autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties, and speech, language and communication difficulties. An established headteacher retired in Summer 2007. The deputy headteacher was the acting headteacher from September 2007 to February 2008. The current headteacher took up the post in February this year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Meopham Community Primary is an outstanding school. Pupils make exceptionally good progress from their average starting points because of high quality teaching and an exciting curriculum. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average overall. Excellent care, guidance and support, which lead to an extremely positive school climate, contribute significantly to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being.

First-rate leadership and management are crucial factors contributing to the school's success. The new headteacher has quickly gained the confidence and respect of pupils, parents, staff and governors. He is extremely well supported by other senior staff. The school's performance is systematically reviewed so leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and areas in need of improvement. The leadership of mathematics and science is highly effective and this contributes to the consistently high standards in these subjects. There have been good improvements to English and to information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection. Governors have an extremely good understanding of the school's performance. This enables them to provide constructive challenge as well as very good support.

Parents hold very positive views about the school and are extremely pleased with both the care and education provided for their children. The leadership and management, pupils' conduct, the quality of teaching and the care and support provided all receive high praise. Parents are particularly pleased with the support for pupils who have specific learning needs. These comments from the parents' questionnaires summed up the views of many, 'Very well managed school', 'Excellent behaviour and manners displayed by the children'. 'Teachers make learning interesting and fun' and 'Excellent support for those with difficulties'.

Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. National test results for Year 6 in 2007 were exceptionally high in mathematics and science and above average in English. National comparative information and school-based assessments show that pupils made exceptionally good progress from their starting points in mathematics and science, and good progress in English. School assessments and pupils' work indicate that standards and progress in the current Year 6 are similar. Strong established leadership in mathematics and science and an emphasis on investigative and problem work contribute to the high standards and excellent achievement in these subjects. Reading standards are also high and the school is working on improving pupils' writing in order to bring English standards in line with mathematics and science. Pupils are confident and articulate speakers because of the good opportunities for discussion planned within lessons. A range of positive strategies are being implemented to further improve writing. Drama, discussion, role-play, the use of films and selecting topics which appeal to boys are all broadening pupils' opportunities and experience. The school has increased writing in other subjects but recognises that there is scope to extend this further.

Teaching is enthusiastic and interesting. It is outstanding overall. The purpose of the lessons is always clear so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Clear guidance is provided so pupils can assess their own progress. Teachers' instructions and explanations promote learning extremely well. Questioning is used skilfully by teachers to challenge pupils' thinking and to check their understanding. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations of learning and behaviour. The school's own checks on pupils' progress are used effectively to match tasks to pupils' abilities and needs, especially in mathematics. As a result, pupils are challenged well,

their interest is maintained and they make outstanding gains in their learning. Pupils show high levels of concentration and produce quality work. Collaborative and independent learning are well developed. Teaching assistants are very well directed. They make a valuable contribution to learning, particularly for those pupils who need additional support. The marking of pupils' work is detailed and thorough. Praise and encouragement are provided for good work, and clear comments guide improvement.

The curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment and to their exceptional progress. It makes an excellent contribution to their personal development. The much improved ICT provision is used well to support teaching and learning in a range of subjects. Provision for art and design is a strong feature. Pupils create impressive pieces of work in the style of artists such as Van Gogh and Andy Warhol. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn to play musical instruments, including keyboards, piano, guitar and violin. A very good range of clubs, visits and visitors enrich pupils' learning. Successful residential visits for Year 4 and Year 6 provide exciting outdoor activities which develop pupils' geography, problem solving and teambuilding skills. Popular clubs include band, basketball, chess, choir, drama, football, gardening, netball and recorders.

There are highly effective systems to safeguard pupils and to assess and monitor their attainment and progress. Pupils have specific learning targets in reading, writing and mathematics so they know what they are working on to improve. Assessment, care and support for pupils who need specific help are excellent. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are courteous, friendly and respectful of others. They thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected by their well above average attendance and their love of learning. Behaviour is outstanding because of the high expectations by staff and the strong relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and show an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating, exercising regularly and keeping safe. They thrive on the additional responsibilities. Those on the school council have contributed to improvements to accommodation and playtime and lunchtime arrangements. They have also been involved in the selection of staff, including the new headteacher. Pupils raise funds for a range of charities and participate well in local community activities. At Meopham School, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education as by the time they leave, they possess very well developed numeracy, literacy and ICT skills. In addition to these, their personal and social skills are exceptionally well developed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Most year groups enter the school with knowledge and skills expected for their age. Children settle quickly because of effective induction arrangements and a strong partnership with parents. Outstanding leadership, high quality teaching and an exciting curriculum enable children to make excellent progress in all areas of learning. A wide range of stimulating activities is planned both inside and outside the classrooms around interesting themes such as 'Traditional tales'. Teachers and teaching assistants provide an effective blend of adult-led tasks enabling children to explore, be creative and work independently. Imaginative role-play areas are well linked to themes and successfully promote creativity and enjoyment. Children are inspired and motivated by the stimulating activities and learning environment. Children's behaviour and relationships with others are outstanding. They are extremely well prepared for moving into Year 1, the next stage of their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for all pupils to apply and develop their writing skills in other subjects so they are as confident in their writing as they are in their reading and mathematics.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meopham Community Primary School, Gravesend DA13 0JW

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed my visit and would like to tell you about some of the things I found out. Yours is an outstanding school and one you can all be very proud of.

These are strengths of the school:

- Children in Reception get off to an excellent start.
- You all thoroughly enjoy school and your attendance is outstanding.
- Teaching is really good, which is why you are making so much progress.
- You reach extremely high standards in reading, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.
- The school is a very caring, friendly and pleasant place to be.
- Your behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school.
- You show an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- An excellent range of learning activities is provided for you, including clubs, visitors and visits.
- Displays of artwork are particularly good.
- The school is extremely well led by your headteacher and senior staff.
- Staff take excellent care of you and give you outstanding support.
- Your parents are supportive of the school and are very pleased with the care and education provided.

There is just one area that I think could be improved:

- Some of you could make even more progress in writing, and the school is working hard to make this happen.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by focusing on your writing skills. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts Lead Inspector