

The Meadows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132179
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	319562
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Linda Killman HMI

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	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Thomas
Headteacher	Mrs Josephine Simmons
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Calder Road Lincoln LN5 9TL
Telephone number	01522 721708
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Meadows is a new primary school of average size. The former infant and junior schools amalgamated into one school in September 2007 under new leadership. Pupils are mainly White British and come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds; few have free school meals. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with a statement of special educational need are well above average. On entry to Reception, pupils' attainment is generally in line with national expectations. Some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This new school provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education and care for its pupils. The inclusion and success of all learners is central to the headteacher's vision and drives the direction for the school. The new headteacher and deputy are key players in developing teamwork and as a result, they have successfully shaped a cohesive school community within a year. The leadership team is effective, accurate in their evaluation of the school's work and intent on laying firm foundations for the school's future success. Expectation for better performance is high and systems to secure greater consistency in teaching and learning are in place. Aspirational targets for pupils' accelerated progress, underpinned by systematic monitoring systems, are beginning to raise standards.

Effective training has enabled teachers to assess pupils' work with improved precision. Consequently, they have a better understanding of what pupils know and can do so that they can plan the next steps in learning. They are using an effective system to pinpoint the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils. Nonetheless, the most able and those with special gifts and talents are not yet achieving all that they should. This is because, in their daily planning, most teachers are not setting tasks to challenge their thinking and unleash their dynamic and creative potential.

Inspectors observed a minority of lessons that were good or outstanding but the majority of teaching is satisfactory. The best teaching is typically upbeat and exciting with engaging activities planned with precision to ensure that all learners make sufficient progress. However, some teachers are not always matching the work well enough to meet the needs and abilities of all groups to maximise their progress.

Staff, parents and pupils are adjusting to 'The Meadows' ways of working. Most parents are pleased with the new approaches commenting that their children are motivated, switched on and keen to learn. Nonetheless, a significant minority consider that some inconsistencies exist. Pupils say that they enjoy school and most attend regularly. There is an increasing focus on pupils' achievement where public celebration of their accomplishments builds their self-esteem, helping them to feel positive about learning. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and improving; the majority know the rules and abide by them. Staff are responsive to their views and this is strengthening trust and respect in pupil/teacher relationships. Most pupils know how to live healthy lifestyles and stay safe. Staff treat any incidents of bullying or racist incidents seriously and act quickly to resolve any problems. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are all satisfactory.

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and staff are beginning to make meaningful links between subjects to strengthen pupils' understanding. The school is gradually enriching the curriculum with visits, visitors and clubs, enabling pupils to extend their skills beyond the school day adding to their enjoyment of school life. Nonetheless, teachers sometimes miss opportunities for pupils to apply the skills pupils learn in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects.

Strong leadership clearly demonstrated by the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy and other senior leaders, has begun to secure better outcomes for learners and this is indicative of the school's good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

From starting points that are in line with expectations for five-year-olds, children work steadily, making adequate progress in relation to the early learning goals. The environment is inviting and well organised with sufficient opportunities for children to use indoor and outdoor space. Staff are attentive to the needs and welfare of all children. However, too often adults are pre-occupied with supervising one activity and so fail to respond to unforeseen events. Additionally, too much direction by the adults reduces opportunities for children to make choices and develop as confident, independent learners. The children show good attitudes towards learning and are willing to participate. Currently there is a lack of leadership and direction for the development of the Foundation Stage. The school's self-evaluation has identified this and plans are securely in place to address this issue when the school moves into new premises next term.

What the school should do to improve further

- Match learning more closely to pupils' needs and abilities, especially the most able and those with special gifts and talents.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects.
- Set clear direction for developments within the Foundation Stage, focussing on achievement, personal development and well-being.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school's latest assessment information shows that most pupils are making satisfactory progress from their starting points in English, mathematics and science. A significant number of pupils who had previously fallen behind are now on track to reach the standards expected for their age. A watchful eye is kept on all pupils' progress. If any underachievement is spotted, additional support or catch up programmes are quickly put in place. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating and the gap between where they are and where they should be is beginning to close. The school has rightly focussed on writing this year to raise standards, especially in Key Stage 2. An intensive training programme for staff has increased their knowledge and understanding of better ways to teach writing. They talk to pupils individually about their progress and explain what they should aim for next. Most pupils are now writing more frequently, at a higher standard and with greater confidence. Effective support for pupils who find learning difficult and those for whom English is not their first language ensures that they make adequate progress and fully participate in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' satisfactory and improving personal development and well-being are characterised by harmonious relationships throughout the school. Pupils feel safe; they say that bullying is rare and adults look after them well. Most pupils enjoy lessons and many are keen participants in the ever-increasing numbers of clubs and extra activities. Their play is active and lively yet they

act responsibly with regard to safety. Pupils show a reasonable understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. The school has made a huge effort to help pupils to understand their feelings, ensuring that they make a better contribution to the community by treating each other and adults with mutual respect. They are beginning to share a sense of belonging to one community and are building positive relationships and learning skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In all classes, teaching promotes positive behaviour and learning. Effective assessment procedures enable teachers to build on pupils' prior attainment. Nonetheless, although there is evidence of varying degrees of difficulty in the work given to groups of pupils, the activities are not always planned with sufficient precision to ensure that the work is not too easy or too difficult. The best lessons are lively, interactive and enjoyable. This is particularly apparent in teaching at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, where engaging activities are pitched at just the right level, ensuring that most pupils succeed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school takes many opportunities to enrich the curriculum. A range of visits and visitors provide pupils with first hand knowledge to support their learning. The outdoor adventurous residential visit helps pupils to develop confidence and independence. Pupils and parents are very appreciative of the wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs that help to enrich the work in lessons. Links between subjects are developing but there are still insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, mathematics and ICT skills in other subjects. Provision for pupils who find learning difficult has improved and good links with support agencies are now in place, especially for pupils for whom English is not their first language. The school identifies pupils with special gifts and talents but targeted provision for them is in its early stages of development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils receive good pastoral care. One parent stated, 'My child is sensitive and he feels safe, cared for and valued here at the school'. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet all statutory requirements and the school monitors attendance effectively. Some pupils requiring additional support with behaviour are receiving it through the Sunshine Project where they receive quality time with an adult to talk through their feelings. Once they return to class, they are better equipped to take responsibility for their behaviour. Skilful teaching assistants support pupils with significant learning and/or communication difficulties to ensure that they successfully integrate and participate fully in lessons. The quality of assessment practice in the school is improving. Most classroom displays provide good guidance for pupils to improve their work. Some pupils are receiving valuable feedback on how well they are doing and advice on what they need to do to improve. However, effective assessment procedures, including marking, are inconsistent across the school and are not yet fully embedded to ensure that all pupils receive good academic guidance. Pupils are beginning to evaluate their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and her deputy provide clear direction and their strong partnership has successfully merged two very different schools. They take on challenges with optimism and enthusiasm, inspiring and motivating staff to do the same. The leadership team is committed and effective because they are professionally well equipped to fulfil their management roles. Drawing upon a wide range of valuable evidence stemming from good quality assurance activities, they have a clear view of where strengths and weaknesses lie. This enables them to plan effectively. The roles of subject leaders are beginning to develop but, newly in post, they have not yet undertaken enough monitoring activities to have a secure grip on achievement and standards in their subjects across key stages. The newly formed governing body is establishing effective ways of working so that it can focus more acutely on achievement and learning. The upbeat and reflective attitude of the school's leadership and management at all levels ensures that there is no room for complacency and contributes to the school's good capacity to improve.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

13 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Meadows Primary School, Lincoln, LN5 9TL

Thank you for being so friendly when the inspectors came to see how well you are learning. It was a pleasure to spend two days at your school. We enjoyed talking to you and what you told us was very helpful. You impressed us with how quickly you are learning to do things 'The Meadows' way. You and your parents told us that you enjoy school and we are pleased that you all come to school regularly.

These are some of the good things we found:

- Your new headteacher and deputy have done a super job in bringing you together from two different schools.
- You behave well in class and around the school.
- The teachers are doing a good job in checking how well you are learning so that they can give you extra help if you need it.
- You are catching up on your learning in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Most of you are now working at the same level as pupils of your age in other schools.

We think that there are things that can be even better so we have asked your teachers to:

- give you work that is not too easy or too difficult
- provide you with more opportunities to use your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects
- make changes to the ways that the youngest children learn.

Your education is getting better and better. We wish you every success in the future in your new building. In September, some of you will be the first pupils to set foot in the school and use all of the new equipment. What an exciting thought!

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman Her Majesty's inspector