

# The Meadows Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103296
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	323794
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Eadie

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	414
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeremy Sugg
<b>Headteacher</b>	Victoria Greggs
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Bristol Road South Birmingham B31 2SW
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 6753203
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 6752242

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Meadows is a larger than average primary school, situated in an urban area on the outskirts of Birmingham. The nature of the area has changed since the closure of the nearby car factory three years ago and pupils are now attending from further afield. This is reflected in a growing number of pupils eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is increasing and is above average, and well above average in some year groups. The school has a special unit attached with 26 places for pupils with statements of special educational needs related to speech and communication impairments. There are currently 24 pupils in this unit and these pupils are integrated into classes in the main school whenever appropriate. Mini-Meadows is a privately run before- and after-school club and holiday scheme, which uses school premises.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Areas for development identified at the last inspection have been addressed satisfactorily and the good curriculum noted has been maintained. Standards in writing rose for the following two years. However, the initiatives to improve writing were not sufficiently long-term and standards fell back again in 2007. This led to managers carrying out some good analysis and further strategies have been put in place to raise standards in writing. These are in their early stages and there has been little impact as yet. Improvements are particularly needed in Year 3 and Year 4 and in pupils' accuracy of spelling and grammar.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress. They reach average standards by the time they leave. In general, though, more able pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable as they are not always given sufficiently challenging work. Children in the Reception classes are currently making satisfactory progress. However, there is a new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) manager and she has already put in place good assessment procedures and planning which are leading to improved provision for these children. This is starting to have an impact on children's progress.

There is good provision in the special unit and pupils in the unit make good progress relative to their starting points. These pupils benefit from the carefully focused guidance they receive, and a priority is placed on enabling them to learn and take part in the usual school activities alongside their peers wherever possible. There is also good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the main school, and many of these make good progress, often as a result of good support from teaching assistants.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good, largely because of the good levels of personal and pastoral care. All adults know the pupils and their circumstances well and do everything they can to ensure that they are safe and cared for. Pupils appreciate this good care and say that they feel secure in school and that there is always someone to listen if they have a problem. Many parents commented on the caring environment, saying such things as, 'Staff encourage the children by providing a well-ordered and happy atmosphere.'

Good systems have been put in place to keep a check on the progress that pupils are making. However, these systems are not being used well to set pupils those key next steps in learning. This is hindering pupils' progress. Whilst teaching is satisfactory overall, there is insufficient good teaching. This is because teachers do not often set work that is closely matched to pupils' varying abilities, particularly for the more able. Also, too often lessons are dominated by teachers talking rather than giving pupils opportunities to discuss and investigate for themselves. Pupils are not all sufficiently aware of what they are aiming to learn.

There are good leadership structures. The headteacher has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve the school and this view is shared by the leadership team. However, progress has been slower than it might have been as some quite important issues, such as standards in writing, have not been addressed sufficiently quickly or thoroughly. Despite this, there is a sense of common purpose and the school has a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

There is a new manager for the EYFS this term, who is already having an impact in improving progress, which is currently satisfactory. She has already identified that children's progress in social and emotional development and reading and writing has not been as good as progress in other areas of learning. She has started very good systems of assessment, where children's developmental stepping stones are noted as well as pointers set for their future learning. This close focus on what pupils need to do is already improving their learning. She has also put in place very thorough planning for the classes, where developmental planning is supplemented for every activity with outside learning opportunities. All staff are fully behind this approach and the redesigned open-plan area is helping them to deliver it well. There are very good links with parents so that they can play a full part in their children's learning. The EYFS unit is a bright, stimulating and vibrant unit that is aiding these young children's start to their educational journey.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of writing for all pupils, but particularly those in Years 3 and 4, by improving pupils' vocabulary and their accuracy of spelling and grammar.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, so that more of it is good or better, by ensuring that all pupils are given work appropriate to their abilities and that they are given more opportunities for independent learning.
- Ensure that teachers use the assessment systems to plan for the next steps of learning for all pupils and that they share these next steps with their pupils.

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

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they reach average standards by the time they leave. Standards in science have improved in recent years as the subject is now being taught using an investigative approach. Standards in mathematics have also improved, but not as consistently. However, standards in writing in the national assessments in Year 6 have fallen back after improving in 2005 and 2006. This is because strategies put in place to improve writing did not fully address the basic weaknesses in spelling, vocabulary and grammar lower down the school. The progress that pupils made last year in writing, particularly in Years 3 and 4, is barely adequate. Recent initiatives to improve standards in writing have not yet had a chance to have any significant impact, though some good work was seen in using stimuli from other subjects, history for instance, to engage pupils' interest.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school a good deal, as demonstrated by their good behaviour and positive attitudes. Attendance is satisfactory because some parents take their children out of school for term time holidays. Staff are very good role models who are safety conscious and caring. As a result, pupils are helped, in a safe and happy environment, to be thoughtful and considerate. Pupils

enjoy school and behave maturely and responsibly. They are well aware of how to keep themselves and others safe and to be understanding of others' feelings.

Pupils' understanding of keeping themselves healthy and physically fit is good. This can be seen by the many opportunities for physical activity taken at breaks, lunchtimes and after school and by the school's healthy eating programmes. Many of these features are the result of the work of the school council and the contribution of pupils, parents, staff and the local community. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community and are being appropriately prepared for their working life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers plan their lessons so they have a coherent structure. They have good subject knowledge that often lends confidence to their teaching and supports their planning. They assess work regularly, but the use of the information from this assessment is too variable. Many teachers use assessment in lessons to give pupils detailed and helpful feedback on their learning. However, this information is not always used to improve lesson planning or curriculum changes. When teachers do not have a clear enough understanding of pupils' needs, this results in too low expectations. Most set targets that motivate pupils, but it is not always clear to pupils how they might improve or make greater progress and reach these targets.

The teachers are also skilled at creating good relationships so that pupils feel supported and respected. As a consequence, the majority behave well and enjoy their lessons. Occasionally, however, lessons are not delivered with a pace and purpose which capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm. There are missed opportunities for pupils to investigate and research for themselves.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

A good, broad and balanced curriculum matches the needs of most pupils. It has particular strengths in provision for pupils who find learning difficult, and good provision for teaching modern foreign languages. It does much to help pupils understand the culture and diversity of a wider society, and uses its topic-based approach to further enhance community cohesion, for example in a recent major celebration of the school's fiftieth anniversary. The curriculum is enriched by a wide programme of sporting and fitness activities, music and drama groups. Pupils benefit from an ambitious programme of residential visits which enrich their social development, their knowledge of history and geography and extend their experience of outdoor activities.

National frameworks are used well to promote reading, and recently changes have been introduced to tackle weaknesses in writing. Planning for the use of computers is effective, despite problems of location of equipment. At present, provision to challenge and extend higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils in lessons is underdeveloped.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care is good and staff know pupils very well. Pupils in turn recognise that they are very well looked after. Staff are trusted, respected and approachable. These relationships are

an important factor in developing pupils' confidence and well-being. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and safety are secure. A very few parents expressed concerns about the way the rare incidences of bullying are dealt with. Children spoken to during the inspection did not share this view, and no evidence of bullying was seen. Though effective in practice, the school's anti-bullying policy and procedures are not sufficiently clear or well communicated.

Pupils' progress is tracked and, where necessary, teachers intervene to offer well-planned targeted advice and support. However, although most pupils have a fair understanding of their current standards, they do not all know what they need to do to improve and make better progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The leadership team is well structured, with suitable delegation of responsibilities to give the school a sense of direction and purpose. Self-evaluation is accurate and involves most stakeholders. However, it does not always lead to a concerted drive to raise standards. Although the monitoring system has improved and is now satisfactory, checks are not frequent enough to measure the effects of the new approaches to writing, for example. As a result, teaching and curriculum approaches are not improved flexibly enough to drive progress forward. Good use is made of outside agencies and providers such as business and enterprise links, extended services, and specialist staff to enhance the opportunities for pupils. The governors have a good grasp of the school's priorities and needs. Nevertheless, their role in monitoring the school's performance remains underdeveloped. The school has been awarded the national Inclusion Quality Mark, which recognises the inclusion of pupils from the special unit as well as the school's inclusive ethos and approach to meeting the needs of differing groups of pupils.

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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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	3

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Meadows Primary School, Birmingham, B31 2SW

Thank you so much for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you and hearing how you enjoy many of the activities that are provided for you. Your school is giving you a satisfactory education at present, though several things have improved.

These are the most important things we found about your school:

- You make satisfactory progress and reach average standards by the time you leave because teaching is satisfactory.
- You are developing well into mature and responsible young people who behave well and work hard because all of the adults look after you well.
- You are given a good range of things to study in lessons, particularly in the other languages that you learn. You are also given lots of opportunities to do things outside lessons, such as visits and particularly the residential trips.
- Those of you in the special unit and those who find your work difficult are supported very well and often make good progress.
- The new systems in the Reception classes are good.
- Your headteacher and staff know what needs to be done to improve your school and have made a start to improve things.

These are the things we have suggested that should be improved:

- Some of you are not making sufficient progress in writing, particularly in Years 3 and 4, and we think you need to improve your spelling, grammar and use of vocabulary.
- There are some lessons when you are given work that is too easy or too difficult and we think teachers should make sure that you always have work that is just right for you.
- Teachers do not always tell you exactly what you need to do to improve your work.

We know you will want to make better progress. You can help by making sure you work hard and tell your teachers when you are finding the work too easy.

With best wishes

John D Eadie Lead inspector