

Meridian Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114475
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	326018
Inspection date	14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	321
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	44
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vicky Phillips
Headteacher	Angela Marie Mills
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Roderick Avenue North Peacehaven BN10 8BZ
Telephone number	01273 584212

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	14 January 2009
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Fax number

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Age group 4-11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the success of the creative curriculum in helping to raise standards, particularly in boys' reading, and writing throughout the school
- the impact of the school's initiatives in promoting community cohesion
- the effectiveness of the initiative to develop teachers as leaders and the impact this is having on monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Evidence was gathered from an examination of the school's documentation, parents' questionnaires and pupils' work, and observations of pupils in classes, around the school and in the playground, as well as interviews with the staff, pupils, governors and parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, are not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school serves the local area and nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Provision for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is made in the Reception class. The school has Healthy Schools status, holds the silver Activemark and is working towards the Artsmark award. It is taking part in the pilot of the 'Making Good Progress' initiative. There is a nursery unit on site as well as breakfast and after-school clubs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features, notably in the quality of care and support for the pupils, which makes a significant contribution to their excellent personal development. It provides a good education for its pupils in a stimulating learning environment and there has been a good improvement in standards since the previous inspection. The key to the school's success lies in the dynamic and innovative approach of the headteacher which ensures that not only pupils, but also all staff, have a chance to develop their potential. The system of leadership employed ensures that staff at all levels are involved in monitoring aspects of the school's performance. As a result, all are aware of where improvements need to be made and have been fully involved in discussions as to how these should be tackled. Parents, too, are very supportive of the school, as one explained 'The headteacher is a very strong leader but one who readily takes parents' views into account.'

When children enter the Reception class, they are performing at levels which are well below those expected for their age. They receive an outstanding start to their education because activities are planned to meet their individual needs in an exciting and stimulating learning atmosphere. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress and achieve well. They reach standards that are above average in mathematics and broadly average in English and science. The school has identified that higher attaining pupils are not always performing as well as they might in writing and boys' performance in reading is not as high as girls'. Strategies to improve these two areas, particularly boys' reading, are proving to be successful. This is because the books purchased and the curriculum adaptations made, notably through the introduction of 'Learning Journeys', appeal to boys and motivate them effectively. Writing is beginning to improve throughout the school, and higher attaining pupils are inspired and challenged, not only in class, but also when attending 'author' days together with pupils from other local schools.

The school lays a great emphasis on pupils being fully involved in their own learning. When visiting each room, it was evident from the excellent behaviour and enthusiastic responses that pupils greatly enjoy their education. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they are going to learn. Resources such as interactive white-boards are used skilfully by teachers and pupils alike. This collaboration helps make explanations clear and lessons more interesting. Classroom management and organisation are particularly strong and teachers plan a good range of activities that enable all pupils to be purposefully employed even when not directly supervised. They respond to questions thoughtfully and are encouraged to explore and share ideas with each other. Teachers assess work accurately and use the information gained to plan future work that is well matched to pupils' differing needs. However, marking is not always as clear as it could be and does not always follow the school policy. This lack of consistency means that, although some pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work on a day-to-day basis, not all do.

Pupils were consulted as to the topics they would particularly like to cover in their 'Learning Journeys' and their ideas have been incorporated to form an inspiring and vibrant curriculum. Parents are delighted with it, as one commented, 'My son has loved the different topics covered and has been particularly inspired by the weather and Romans, which has led to lots of imaginative work outside the classroom.' Lively and exciting displays of pupils' work bring the school to life and are evidence of the way in which pupils' achievements are valued and celebrated. Learning themes embrace many disciplines and subjects and ensure that pupils understand they are growing up in a culturally diverse society. An excellent programme for the

personal, social and health education of the pupils contributes effectively to their outstanding personal development.

The pupils are extremely well nurtured, and the care and concern that is provided for them on a day-to-day basis is outstanding. Both their personal and academic development are very carefully monitored from the time they enter the school. Pupils know and understand their targets and eagerly track their progress towards achieving them. The easy accessibility of the worry boxes and the approachability of the staff ensure that there is always a way of resolving problems. Pupils appreciate this and assured inspectors that concerns are always sorted out.

Pupils learn and play together in a harmonious atmosphere. Playground buddies ensure that all those who want to play have the opportunity. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to stay safe and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They enthuse about the wide range of playground activities and the use of the 'trim trail'. They recognise that they have a responsibility to others and proudly relate their involvement in local and national charity fund-raising activities. The school councillors are very active, take their roles very seriously and have a mature outlook in considering how they can make things better for the school and its pupils. Pupils are very aware of contemporary environmental concerns and are particularly proud that their 'walking bus' initiative is introducing a second route. Pupils' excellent interpersonal skills, well developed skills in numeracy and improving literacy skills provide a good preparation for their future life.

The headteacher's clear vision for the direction of the school is shared by staff and governors alike. Staff and governors know how well the school is doing, and their self-evaluation is accurate. Challenging targets have been set and there is a good capacity to bring about improvements. The governors provide good support and challenge and are fully involved in the strategic development of the school. They have taken the lead in promoting community cohesion and their policy and strategies for promoting understanding and harmony are well embedded. Their efforts in promoting cohesion are particularly strong locally, as one parent wrote, 'Meridian is the heart of Peacehaven', a view which was echoed by many. Strong international links and understanding have been established. However, the school's own audit has revealed that, whilst there are plans to extend links nationally, these have not yet been fully forged.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children in the Reception classes make excellent progress and most join Year 1 able to work well within the standards expected, except in writing. Teaching is lively and stimulating and enables the children to learn effectively. Teachers make particularly good use of the exciting outside area, planning interesting activities to support all the areas of the EYFS curriculum. There is a good balance between those activities led by the teacher and those that children choose for themselves. Lively, interesting themes, such as the current 'under sea' topic, provide many opportunities for exciting and imaginative play across all areas of learning. The care and attention to children's welfare is outstanding. The establishment of a specific 'Parent Link' is of particular value. More emphasis is being paid to the development of early writing skills as a result of the rigorous monitoring undertaken and the whole-school focus on this area. Children are prepared well for their future learning by a strong emphasis on developing their social skills

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils' work is marked consistently in line with school policy, so that all pupils not only understand what they need to do to improve on a day-to-day basis, but also do it.

- Ensure that plans for promoting community cohesion on a national basis are put into practice and monitored to ensure they are meaningful and effective.

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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?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

15 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meridian Community Primary School, Peacehaven BN10 8BZ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. Your school gives you a good education and is working hard to make it even better.

- These are the things we liked best.
- You behave very well and are really keen and enthusiastic about your learning.
- You are all doing very well in mathematics and are working hard to improve your writing.
- You really understand the importance of having a healthy lifestyle, and it is good that you enjoy your 'trim trail' and playground activities so much.
- Teachers make learning interesting for you, and you know how to improve your work from the targets that are set.
- You have a varied curriculum and your learning themes are really exciting and interesting for you.
- The teachers and staff take excellent care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors lead the school very well and are very keen to make it even better.

We think that a very few things could be even better.

- Your work is marked conscientiously by your teachers most of the time, but more could be done to make this more consistent and to ensure that you do what you need to do to improve your work on a day-to-day basis.
- You have many valuable links with the local and international community which really help to promote understanding and harmony. We think that more could be done to extend this nationally.

I am glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.

Very best wishes

Christine Huard

Lead Inspector