

Mere School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126263
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	340948
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Gerald Griffin

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 of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Porter
Headteacher	Catriona Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	0 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. Three-quarters of the time in school was spent observing learning. All of the teachers were seen teaching and 15 lessons were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books, progress records, teachers' lesson plans, school improvement plans, policies and reports. They analysed 105 pupils' questionnaires, 27 staff questionnaires, 95 parents' questionnaires, and undertook a case study of several pupils whose circumstances have the potential to make them vulnerable.

It looked in detail at the following.

- The progress made by boys across the school.
- Learning and progress at Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics.
- The quality of the challenge that teachers provide to secure good progress.
- The effectiveness of leaders' improvement planning to accelerated progress.

Information about the school

Mere is a smaller than average size primary school. Nearly all pupils come from White British families. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The school hosts a specialist learning centre for children with complex learning needs from the Mere and Tisbury cluster of schools. The school has recently gained a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Artsmark Gold and Activemark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Mere School provides a satisfactory quality of education within a very safe, welcoming and caring atmosphere. Pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory and attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average. The progress of pupils in Key Stage 2, which has been slow over recent years, has improved and is now satisfactory. The procedures to check pupils' progress are now effective so that any slowing of progress is quickly spotted and remedied. The progress of boys across the school, which has also been slow in recent years, has accelerated and now matches that made by the girls. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective specialist teaching they receive, especially in the learning centre. Children make good progress in the lively Reception class. This is because teaching is good and the curriculum provides exciting activities that children enjoy. These successes, combined with broadly accurate self-evaluation, mean that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Staff use their detailed knowledge of each child skilfully to provide a good level of care and personal support. This means all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, are cared for well. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school. They feel very safe and secure and their behaviour is good. Pupils have a great deal of knowledge about factors affecting their health and well-being and adopt healthy lifestyles outstandingly well. Safeguarding is outstanding. For example, quality assurance and risk assessment systems are excellent and take account of pupils' and parents' views.

There are several good aspects to teaching although it is satisfactory overall. Class management is good, relationships are very positive and pupils are keen to learn. However, teaching does not always sustain a good level of challenge throughout lessons to ensure that pupils are always working hard. Usually this is because work does not match precisely the needs of each pupil. In such cases, some pupils find activities too easy and coast while others struggle to make good progress because they find the work too hard. This is especially so in mathematics lessons at Key Stage 2, because teachers do not use the data they have on each pupil's progress consistently well to plan challenging next steps in their learning. Pupils, especially the older ones, are not clear about the challenging levels they are expected to reach at the end of the year and the levels at which they are currently working. This means they do not know specifically what they need to do next to improve their work.

Although leaders track pupils' progress carefully, they do not always use this information well enough to judge the success of their planned actions for improvement and to identify areas in need of further development, to ensure good progress by pupils.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching to secure good progress by:
 - matching work closely to pupils' needs and abilities so that they are challenged well throughout lessons
 - making better use of progress data in mathematics to plan challenging work that will accelerate pupils' learning at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure pupils, especially the older ones, are well informed about the levels they are expected to attain by the end of the year and the level at which they are currently working so that they know precisely what their next steps in learning are.
- Sharpen school improvement by ensuring that leaders use data more effectively to check the success of its plans to raise attainment and progress, and to identify where further improvements to learning can be secured.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The learning observed in lessons during the inspection was satisfactory overall and good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Good learning, for example, was seen in a Key Stage 1 mathematics lesson where pupils were enthusiastically using their numeracy skills to solve mathematical problems. The teacher's lively delivery and the good use of resources engaged pupils well and they enjoyed the lesson. The class made good progress in developing their numeracy skills because the work the teacher planned closely matched the needs of each pupil. In another lesson on subtraction, learning was not as effective because work was not matched as closely to pupils' needs. As a result, some pupils became stuck with calculations that were too hard, while others raced through calculations that they found too easy.

Pupils enjoy learning and their achievement is satisfactory. Boys' progress has accelerated this year because teachers' plans take more account of their learning needs. For example, boys have more opportunity to write factual accounts on topics that specially appeal to them. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good because the well-trained teaching assistants and staff in the learning centre make detailed and accurate assessments of each child's needs. These are skilfully used by them to provide these pupils with learning programmes that are closely tailored to their needs.

Bullying is rare and any cases are quickly and effectively resolved. Pupils have a crystal clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example, from strangers and on the internet. They eat a healthy diet and take plenty of exercise both in and out of school, recognised in the school's national awards. They have a very detailed understanding of the illnesses that can result from unhealthy lifestyles. Pupils are very keen to take responsibility, although some of the younger ones would like more opportunities to act as monitors. They generously collect for charity and enjoy taking part in the life of the town. Pupils have positive attitudes towards school, and their good social skills and satisfactory grasp of key skills, such as literacy and numeracy, ensure

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that they are adequately prepared for secondary school. Most pupils attend school very regularly and attendance is average.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. They reflect maturely on their feelings. Pupils' good behaviour is based on a strong moral code. Occasionally pupils fidget if they have been on the carpet for too long. Pupils work together well in teams and readily help each other. While pupils respect others from backgrounds different to their own, their understanding of the diversity of British culture is a relative weakness.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers use resources, such as computers, well to engage pupils and develop learning. This is starting to promote better progress in Key Stage 2. However, teaching does not always challenge pupils sufficiently to enable them to make good progress.

The curriculum supports aspects of pupils' personal development well. For example, health and physical education lessons effectively promote pupils' understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The good opportunities for pupils to play musical

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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instruments and learn French broaden horizons. Many visitors to school and educational visits add to pupils' enjoyment of school. The curriculum does not develop pupils' skills of calculation well enough in mathematics lessons nor does it place sufficient emphasis on the correct use of verbs and accurate spelling and punctuation when they write. The school is aware of these shortcomings and has firm plans to improve matters. A good range of sports and other clubs raises pupils' aspirations.

Pupils confidently approach an adult with any worries, knowing their concerns will be quickly and effectively resolved. The school's targeted support for its small number of vulnerable pupils is effective. For example, one pupil, who started school with extremely delayed emotional and physical development, has received sensitive support that means he is now a confident, outgoing young person who is fully integrated into the life of the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff enthusiastically embrace the headteacher's clearly expressed drive to improve the school's performance. The governors work hard on behalf of the school and their growing understanding of data means that they are starting to challenge it over its performance. Leaders do not use progress data effectively to gauge the success of its actions for improvement or to pinpoint where further gains can be made. Leaders have provided training that has sharpened teachers' lesson planning to take account of the differing learning needs of boys and girls. Subject leaders are training staff in the use of data to plan writing and mathematics lessons but it is too early to judge its success.

The school has strong links with outside agencies and uses them well to support pupils' learning and welfare, especially for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and vulnerable pupils. For example, effective liaison with experts means that pupils who use wheelchairs and those with hearing impairment take full part in school activities. Links with parents are good. They are encouraged to play their full part in their children's learning.

High quality safety and safeguarding permeates all aspects of school life. The school regularly reviews its procedures and updates them in response to local and national concerns. Child protection procedures are outstanding and fully meet current safeguarding requirements. The checks that the school makes on the suitability of adults to work with children and pupils are rigorous.

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The school is thoroughly committed to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. While there are areas in which the policies show signs of success, the current satisfactory progress of pupils shows the promotion of equal opportunities to be satisfactory rather than good.

The school has evaluated its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context thoroughly, and the contribution it makes to community cohesion is satisfactory. The work it has undertaken in helping families to support their child's education at home is having a positive impact in school, which is a happy and harmonious community. The school is developing links with a local school with a diverse ethnic intake and with a school in Sudan, which are starting to provide pupils with an insight into communities that are different to their own.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Boys and girls make similarly good progress in Reception. Most enter the school with levels below those expected for their age and reach average levels by the time they start Year 1. Children's personal development is good. For example, they routinely wash their hands before eating a healthy snack. They behave very well, readily share apparatus and are polite to each other and to adults. Parents are very pleased with the way they are kept informed about their child's progress and the guidance they are given as to how they can help their child learn at home. Children are very safe in the indoor classroom and outside learning area.

Learning is good. For example, children were thoroughly engrossed in learning to

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recognise letters and the sounds they make so that they could read words and sentences. Teachers plan an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. However the small classroom sometimes restricts children's choices of indoor activities. Occasionally children's learning slows when adults do not push them on to the next stage of their learning quickly enough. Adults promote well children's gaining of independence, especially during outdoor learning.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Detailed assessments of each child's progress are used well to plan their learning. Training is quickly improving the Early Years Foundation Stage teaching skills of adults working in the setting.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

About half of parents responded to the questionnaire. Many added positive comments, especially about how much pupils enjoyed school. Several parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities wrote about the good individual help children receive, particularly in the learning centre. The inspection agrees with many of the positive feelings of parents. A small number of parents expressed concerns about progress, communication and leadership. The inspectors found that progress for most pupils is satisfactory rather than good and that the school needs to do more to meet the learning needs of pupils, especially in mathematics. The inspectors found that the school welcomes parents' comments and holds an appropriate number of parents' evenings. However, the school wishes to improve this area of its work further and has recently appointed a home school worker to strengthen its links with parents. Inspectors found some aspects of leadership to be good, but that planning for school improvement is not sufficiently robust.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mere School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 170 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	46	46	48	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	43	49	52	5	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	31	45	47	12	13	4	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	27	47	49	17	18	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	37	39	50	53	6	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	39	50	53	1	1	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	32	58	61	6	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	29	53	56	7	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	28	52	55	15	16	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	32	41	43	8	8	6	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	28	39	41	22	23	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	37	39	44	46	11	12	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	42	43	45	7	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mere School, Mere, BA12 6EW

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and having the opportunity to talk to some of you and to see you in lessons and at play. I especially enjoyed hearing your enthusiastic recorder playing. You are rightly proud of the school's happy atmosphere in which you all get on so well together. Mere is a satisfactory school. Here are some of the things we found out.

- Your teachers ensure that you get off to a good start in Reception.
- You enjoy school and feel very safe and secure.
- You try your very best to eat a healthy diet and take plenty of exercise.
- Your behaviour is good.
- You have good relationships with your teachers and you try hard for them.
- The curriculum provides you with exciting clubs and visits, which you enjoy.
- Adults look after you well and are always ready to help you.
- The headteacher and staff are working hard to make the school get better.

We have asked the school to do three things to help you do even better in your learning.

- Make sure teachers provide work for you that is neither too hard nor too easy so you make better progress, especially in mathematics.
- Tell you the levels you should reach at the end of the year and how well you are progressing towards them, so that you know exactly what you need to do next to improve your learning and take more responsibility for it.
- Make sure those in charge use the information on your learning and progress to check whether the school is doing well enough.

You can help the school by continuing to try your best in lessons and behaving well.

I wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gerald Griffin

Lead inspector

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