

Mere Green Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103389
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	343747
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Anne Pitt 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Eeles
Headteacher	Anna Balson
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. Twenty one lessons were observed and thirteen teachers seen; discussion took place with parents, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at records and documentation, the pupils' books, and 25 parental questionnaires. Pupil and staff questionnaires were also considered.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- standards and progress over the current academic year in English and mathematics throughout the school
- the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and in particular improvements over the current academic year
- the accountability of senior managers and their impact on driving up standards.

Information about the school

The school is similar in size to the majority of primary schools. Most pupils, but not all, are from White British backgrounds. The proportion with learning difficulties and statements is exceptionally high because the school has four speech and language resource bases. Children's skills on entry to the Nursery are below the expected levels. The school offers a breakfast and after school club. It holds the Activemark, Healthy Schools and the bronze Eco Schools awards.

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

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school which is going from strength to strength. During the last year it has improved its effectiveness in almost every respect. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Questionnaires indicate that parents are very happy about what is on offer. The headteacher is readily available and responds to parents' issues and suggestions quickly. Together with her staff she has created a genuine team, determined to help pupils to achieve their potential. The astute vision of the senior team and the strong support of the governing body have led to great improvements during the last year in the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make.

Academic performance and the quality of teaching across the school are satisfactory overall and improving rapidly. Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception class. The practical, hands on approach means that by the time that they move into Year 1 they have achieved well to acquire the expected skills for five year olds. Pupils in the rest of the school make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics overall. However, due to highly effective teaching, the pupils in Years 2, 5 and 6 make good progress. The latest unvalidated test results show that standards are much improved and are now broadly average. The work seen in pupils' books during the inspection suggests that this trend will continue. This is due to strengthening and eradicating weak teaching and changing the way teachers plan, assess and track pupils' progress. Even so, the staff realise that these aspects of the school are not yet consistently good and there is much more to do.

The process of school self-evaluation is well embedded. Rigorous checking of performance takes place. The school's capacity to sustain improvement is good because since the last inspection there has been improvement in:

Year 2 and 6 test results

- tracking of pupils' achievement in classes, with the headteacher taking decisive action to address any inadequacy
- attendance figures
- accommodation for the youngest pupils
- the way in which the governors hold the school to account.

All in all, the school provides an effective learning environment where pupils behave well and enjoy school. It is well placed to ensure they do well and succeed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise standards and improve the rate of pupils progress by:
- improving the quality of teaching so that 65% of lessons are good or better by the end of 2011
 - sharing the already good and outstanding practice throughout the school
 - ensuring that work is well matched to the interest, ability and needs of pupils
 - improving teachers' expectations and the pace of lessons
 - ensuring that pupils know their targets
 - make better use of the school's assessment data in order to analyse the learning of different groups and target support where it is most needed
 - ensuring that teachers and pupils use assessment consistently so that they are clear about their achievements and understand precisely what is needed to improve.
 - About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The quality of pupils' learning and performance seen in lessons was generally satisfactory overall: in a few lessons it was good to outstanding. Overall, pupils acquire knowledge and practise skills at a steady pace. Work in books shows that they take a pride in their work. Discussion with pupils revealed that they have noticed changes for the better in school. Year 6 pupils noted that learning is now fun and that they find lessons interesting. Year 2 pupils said that they enjoy doing new things every day and that science work is exciting.

Since the last inspection standards have risen. Currently standards in the end of key stage tests for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6, including a high number of pupils with learning difficulties, are broadly average in English and mathematics. The standard of work seen in pupils' books throughout the school also confirms this. The school's tracking data shows that the progress made by pupils during the current academic year has increased. For example, there has been accelerated progress in Year 6 from a low base, enabling pupils to catch up on lost ground. This rapid progress is not yet consistent across the school, because pupils are sometimes given work that is not well matched to their needs or does not interest them. Pupils in the speech and language resource base also make steady progress. They learn in very small groups and are supported by adults who know their needs well.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and are particularly pleased that there are plenty of adults to look after them. Their behaviour is good and they are polite. Pupils state that bullying is rare and that it is quickly dealt with. Pupils take good care of the environment, they are eco friendly and the school is tidy and litter free. The pupils make a positive contribution to the school community. The school council is taken seriously

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with photos, minutes and agendas of the meetings clearly displayed on a notice board. Bikes and scooters have been purchased for playtimes as a result of the pupils' canvassing. Pupils' involvement in the local community is good through their participation in charity and sporting events. Their knowledge of national and international contexts is growing. Pupils realise the importance of the need to stay healthy, as shown by the good take up rates for sporting extra-curricular activities and their sensible eating choices at lunchtime.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their improved attendance which is now average. Pupils commented on how well they all get on with each other and how the integration of pupils from the speech and language resource base has improved relationships.

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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

How effective is the provision?

The strength in pupils' improved academic performance does not happen by accident. Much of it is due to the relentless drive of the staff to improve their practice. The lessons seen were mainly satisfactory but a few of them were good and outstanding.

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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Typically, teaching is well planned and structured with good use of electronic whiteboards to provide visual examples that stimulate interest and help pupils learn. Work is usually set at the right level but occasionally it does not challenge or interest the pupils sufficiently. Teachers and support staff know pupils well, and behaviour management is positive and encouraging. The outstanding and good lessons were dynamic, moved a long quickly, with a strong focus on what pupils should learn. Expectations were high and not a moment was lost. This practice is not yet widespread but there is a strong will within the school to make it so.

Teachers and pupils are starting to use assessment activities well. Pupils are learning to evaluate their performance during lessons by using a traffic light or 'thumbs up' approach, although sometimes they do not find this easy. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make helpful comments in their books. These effectively identify the strengths and weaknesses of the work and pinpoint what needs to improve. Teachers keep detailed records of how individual pupils are progressing. However, this assessment information is not always used consistently by all teachers to plan future lessons or to set precise targets. Not all pupils readily know their targets.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. There is a good range of enrichment activities, for example before- and after-school clubs and opportunities to visit places of interest. During the inspection, there was great excitement in Year 6 as they prepared for a visit to Drayton Manor. A walk around the school with the headteacher revealed a varied curriculum: younger pupils enjoyed a social time singing songs, infants learnt about using the internet to find information about squirrels while others learnt about letter sounds. Older pupils were constructing paragraphs and using photographs to describe characters. Work displayed on the walls showed that pupils have visited a mosque, learnt about Barack Obama and written about the Great Fire of London.

The school provides a secure and caring environment. Parents say how much they value this. Well-forged links with a range of education, medical and social agencies support the best interests of the pupils. Speech therapy on the school site is particularly effective in promoting the language skills of pupils in the resource base. Pupils with learning difficulties are catered for competently through targeted intervention and liaison with outside agencies.

The before- and after-school clubs are calm and safe environments. Pupils develop co-operative social skills well and engage in a reasonable range of activities which they enjoy, such as construction, drawing and football. Adults supervise the activities well but sometimes miss opportunities to develop language skills by interacting proactively with pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	<p>3</p>

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3
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How effective are leadership and management?

The senior team shows a determination to improve. The school tracks individual pupils' progress well and is continually challenging itself to do better. For example, although it now monitors its achievements well, it is seeking ways of analysing and comparing the data it has even more effectively to check on the progress of specific groups of pupils and measure whether initiatives have a positive impact. The senior team's monitoring is appropriately rigorous and actions taken by the school are well-chosen. The school's views of its own effectiveness, as reflected in its self-evaluation form, are accurate.

Parent and staff questionnaire responses show good support for the school's leadership. The accountability of the senior leadership team has grown. There are now secure systems for regularly checking pupils' work and teachers' planning, tracking pupils' progress and identifying weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning. This is a firm platform for improvement. The challenge facing the school's leadership is to build successfully on these sound foundations, turning aspirations into sustained improvements, and supporting and training staff to raise standards across the school. The governing body provides good challenge and support for the school's leadership. The school satisfactorily promotes equality and tackles discrimination. All pupils are treated fairly and with respect. The school is aware that there are variations in pupil outcomes in different year groups and leaders are taking robust actions to remedy this. Safeguarding procedures are effective and, at the time of the inspection, all the regulations and standards were met. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. Pupils have a good understanding of their local context and the school recognises that the next step is to broaden pupils' national and international links. Partnerships with parents are good. The school consults with them regularly through contact on the playground at the beginning and end of the school day, and through questionnaires. Other partnerships, particularly with local schools, ensure that pupils transfer smoothly between different phases of education.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3

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	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Since the last inspection, the Nursery and Reception classes have combined to form one unit and this has led to significant improvement. Leadership and management have successfully brought the year groups together and developed rigorous methods of tracking children's progress. The indoor provision is welcoming, well laid out with imaginative and stimulating displays. The staff provide high quality care in a secure environment. Well-planned and purposeful practical activities engage the interests of children well. There is a good balance between the activities children can get on with unaided and those where adults teach specific skills. Independence is encouraged. Children learn to behave and co-operate well because the staff are very positive in their approach. Strengths of the teaching include strong relationships and secure planning with a strong focus on personal and social development, and early literacy skills. Planning for numeracy is not quite as strong. The outdoor environment is satisfactory. The planned work is not as structured as that indoors and staff are not as alert to children's needs and challenging their thinking.

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	3
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

Responses to the questionnaire show that there is a high level of satisfaction with the school. Many parents wrote comments about how much the school has improved and how well leaders listen to parents and deal with incidents. An overwhelming majority identify that their children are happy at school and enjoy attending. Inspectors endorse these positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mere Green Combined 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 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 202 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	84	4	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	76	6	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	72	7	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	70	4	16	2	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	76	5	20	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	68	7	28	1	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	52	11	44	0	0	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)	17	68	6	24	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	72	5	20	2	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	64	8	32	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	76	5	20	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	80	4	16	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	80	3	12	2	8	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



14 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mere Green Combined School, Sutton Coldfield, B75 5BL

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their time to talk to us.

These are the best things about your school.

It is improving rapidly.

You are making better progress and reaching higher standards that you were last year.

You get on well with each other and your behaviour is good.

You feel happy and safe in school.

The headteacher, staff and the governing body are good at helping your school to improve.

What I have asked your school to do now.

Make your lessons more interesting and challenging.

Look at your work more closely so that you and your teachers know precisely what needs to be done to improve.

You are lucky that you go to a school where everyone gets on well. You can help it improve by making sure that you know your targets and try your best.

Yours sincerely

Anne Pitt

Her Majesty's Inspector

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