

Meadgate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115032
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311797
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Sandra Tweddell

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	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Hilary Toseland
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Masters
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Mascalls Way Great Baddow Chelmsford Essex CM2 7NS
Telephone number	01245259403
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Meadgate Primary is a smaller than average school that until recently had a declining roll. Many pupils enter the school part way through the year. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, including an area of high social disadvantage. Fewer pupils are eligible for free school meals than in most schools. Children's attainment on entry is broadly what is expected for their age but recently more have joined with less well developed skills and knowledge. Most pupils come from a White British background and fewer are from minority ethnic backgrounds than in most schools. The number of pupils with identified reasons for finding it hard to learn, including those with a statement of special educational need, is much higher than in most schools. Awards gained include Investors in People, the Essex Healthy Schools Award and the Sports Active Mark. The leadership team and most of the teachers have been appointed in the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Meadgate Primary School is an improving school because, following a period of fluctuation in standards, pupils' achievement has improved due to the good leadership and management of the senior leadership team. Governance is good. The school self-evaluation is accurate and has been used well to bring about improvement. Overall effectiveness and value for money are satisfactory, rather than good, because the improvements have not yet led to consistently good achievement in all classes. However, improvements are now seen on a number of fronts. The good achievement in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, and the closing of the achievement gap between boys and girls in Years 3 to 6 are examples. The areas for development from the last inspection have been tackled well in the last two years. The capacity for improvement is therefore good.

The standards achieved by pupils are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory, although good in a number of classes. This year, the school's data indicates that pupils are on track to exceed their targets in Years 5 and 6. The school's targets have been raised twice over this year and are rigorous. Pupils who find learning difficult and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress and many make good progress. The school has many more boys than girls in some classes and boys do well in mathematics, but less well than boys nationally in English and science. More able pupils are beginning to make the progress they should.

Pupils' personal development is good and supported by the school's strong community ethos. A small number of pupils have difficulty with their behaviour, but new systems ensure that other pupils are not disrupted. Pupils learn to live healthy lives and say they feel safe in school. The majority of parents value the school. One parent wrote, 'I am over the moon at my daughter's progress in all her subjects and in her social skills'. Teaching and learning, while satisfactory overall because of some inconsistency, are improving. The pastoral support for all pupils is good, especially for those who have special talents or those who find learning difficult. Pupils' academic guidance is satisfactory and is improving rapidly because of the leadership team's work with all teachers to ensure that assessments of pupils' progress are accurate. The curriculum is good, especially in fostering pupils' enjoyment of learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children begin in the Reception class with broadly average knowledge and skills and make good progress across all areas of learning due to consistently strong teaching and support. Learning is closely monitored so that planning takes account of children's needs. There is an effective partnership between adults that creates a buzz of learning throughout the day. For example, children in this class can tell you why one girl could not eat ham in her sandwich, that a butterfly is drinking nectar from a flower and how to mend your car. Lessons feature a high level of practical activity and the children thrive. The classroom and outdoor area are well resourced and well organised enabling children to learn to work more independently. Enjoyment levels are high and one parent said that the problem with Meadgate Reception class is that her son does not want to go home.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all groups of pupils, particularly boys and the more able, achieve as well as they can.

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning to raise standards.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be 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

When children in this year's Reception class transfer into Year 1, all are likely to have reached the goals expected for their age. Some are working beyond what is expected. Pupils are now making good progress in Years 1 and 2 because of the successful moves to raise standards. Nevertheless, current standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Similarly, by the end of Year 6, standards are average. Achievement is satisfactory because of inconsistencies across the classes but is improving and this year's targets for Years 5 and 6 have been adjusted upwards to reflect this. Newcomers to the school who arrive at different times make satisfactory progress. The achievement gap between boys and girls is closing due to work to raise the achievement of boys, and more able pupils are beginning to make the progress they should. New systems for pupils who find learning difficult and those for whom English is an additional language are leading to rapid improvement in their achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good because of the school's successful caring culture. Pupils have a good understanding of British and European culture and are beginning to be aware of a much wider world. Assemblies contribute well to developing respect for and empathy with people's beliefs. Pupils enjoy school. They are polite, welcoming and well behaved, although there is a small minority of pupils who misbehave without the strong and effective support of adults. Good attendance has been maintained. Pupils feel safe due to good supervision and a safe learning environment. They have a good knowledge of keeping safe, and of healthy living from their science and technology lessons and school lunches. Older pupils enthusiastically adopt a variety of responsibilities, such as helping to promote play with younger ones. Pupils are committed to the class and school council system and members are involved in the appointment of new staff. Pupils' good social skills and average standards in literacy and numeracy prepare them appropriately for their next schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Much teaching is good, especially in the younger age groups, but it is not consistently good throughout the school. In lessons where pupils are well motivated, it is because their teachers are confident, knowledgeable, use a variety of teaching methods and keep learning moving quickly. A few lessons feature too much talking by the teacher or uninteresting activities which fail to engage pupils. This can cause the pupils to become less engaged. Behaviour management is generally good. There has been a big and successful effort to plan lessons that appeal to boys and girls in equal measure. Senior leaders have worked closely with staff to improve their skills in the assessment of all subjects and this work has led to more effective planning of

lessons. Marking is thorough, consistent and often gives pupils good advice about how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and the recently revised curriculum, based upon the views of pupils and local and government initiatives, is contributing very well to pupils' enjoyment of school. They keenly participated in the science enrichment week, excitedly hypothesising about experiments together and watching their results with fascination. French is taught to pupils in Years 3 to 6 and strategic plans exist to ensure its continuity. Many pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including visits to places of educational interest. The curriculum promotes personal development well, especially knowledge of British and European cultures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care for pupils is good. Pupils who join the school at different times are well supported. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements. Bullying and racism are almost non-existent and when they do occur are dealt with effectively, using good procedures. The safe outdoor play areas provide much shade, a good variety of interesting activities and areas designed for different types of recreation, including for those who wish to sit quietly. Procedures for promoting good attendance is well organised and include a zero tolerance of term-time holiday absence, which has reduced these requests. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory and improving with a strong training drive to ensure teachers' assessments are accurate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Improvements in pupils' achievement are due to the good leadership and management of the headteacher and her senior leadership team. Together, they have set a clear direction for the school based on rigorous use of data about pupils' performance to challenge teachers and pupils, and improve consistency across the school. Examples of improvement are the provision for pupils who find learning difficult, the enjoyable curriculum, teachers' increased confidence in using assessment, and achievement in Reception and in Years 1 and 2. Subject leaders, most of whom are new, have a good understanding of standards in their subjects. Governors demonstrate good knowledge of the school and are prepared to develop their roles further. For example, they have their own action plan linked to the school improvement plan. The school's targets are appropriately rigorous and accurate self evaluation is used effectively to improve what the school provides. The capacity for improvement is therefore good.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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?	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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	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	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Meadgate Primary School, Chelmsford, CM2 7NS

Thank you all for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. It was good to see you enjoying your science week. We understand from Years 5 and 6 that their performance went well and that their parents as well as your teachers enjoyed it.

Your school has gone through a number of changes recently with many new teachers and also many new pupils in a number of classes. Mrs Masters and the teachers have worked hard to make sure that the changes are not going to affect your education and we could see the results of their work in the improving progress that you are all now making. You told us that you enjoy school and feel safe in it and we could see for ourselves that you are right. We were impressed by how well most of you behave and take responsibility around the school, particularly members of the school council who also help to choose new teachers for your school. We found that you are cared for well, something with which your parents agree.

Mrs Masters and I discussed what you need to do next to become an even better school and we have thought of two things. The first is for all of you to progress as quickly as can in your work. The second is for all the teachers to continue to work on the changes that have been made so that all their teaching helps you to learn as well as you can. You can help to achieve these by continuing to enjoy school and to work hard.

Thank you once again for being so helpful and for talking to us about your school. We wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Tweddell

Lead inspector