

Mepal and Witcham CofE VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110808
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	378177
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Newstead
Headteacher	Nicola Jones
Date of previous school inspection	08 December 2008
School address	Brangehill Lane Mepal Ely CB6 2AL
Telephone number	01353 778300
Fax number	01353 778300
Email address	office@mepalwitcham.cambs.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	8–9 February 2012
Inspection number	378177



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited nine lessons taught by five teachers and met with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. She took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and to the questionnaires returned by 41 parents and carers during the inspection. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at documents associated with safeguarding procedures and self-evaluation. She examined data and other information about pupils' progress, listened to pupils read and looked at samples of their work. The inspector scrutinised the school's improvement plans as well as the curriculum and teachers' planning for lessons.

Information about the school

The vast majority of the pupils who attend this small primary school come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. Many of these have specific learning difficulties. The school meets the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has a breakfast club three days per week but this was not operating at the time of the inspection. The school has gained National Healthy Schools status, Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark 2 and Level 1 of the Royal Horticultural Society Campaign for School Gardening.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics, though rates of progress are better in mathematics than in writing. This is because leaders and managers have focused on improving mathematics. The school has now turned its attention to improving writing across the curriculum.
- Pupils build progressively on their reading and mathematical skills although there are fewer opportunities for them to develop their writing and computer skills.
- Although provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory, the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) does not engage children well enough to ensure that they make consistently good progress. There is insufficient opportunity for children to initiate their own learning through a range of different activities especially in the outdoor area.
- Teaching is satisfactory but teachers’ questioning skills do not always ensure that all pupils prepare answers to questions. As a result, teachers’ assessments of what pupils already know and can do are not always accurate.
- Teachers’ marking of work is regular but does not always have the desired impact. This is because teachers do not necessarily ensure that their comments are put into practice.
- Pupils are polite and courteous around the school but sometimes in their classes, behaviour for learning is only satisfactory. Occasional incidents of low level disruption interrupt the learning of others in lessons. This is because teachers do not consistently apply the rules contained in the school’s behaviour policy. Pupils say that they feel safe in school.
- The headteacher and governing body clearly know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and this is reflected in a school improvement plan which identifies clear areas for improvement.
- The governing body is knowledgeable and its members support and challenge the school satisfactorily.

Schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and accelerate progress through increasing the proportion of good teaching to 80% by December 2012 by:
 - improving teachers' questioning techniques so that all pupils prepare answers to questions and pupils' thinking skills are promoted well
 - ensuring that teachers assess learning carefully in order to build upon what they already know and can do
 - ensuring that all pupils are engaged actively in learning for the whole lesson.

- Improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that the teaching of phonics is consistently good for all children
 - improving the accuracy of teachers' assessments
 - ensuring that a wide variety of child-initiated activities is provided across the six areas of learning both inside the classroom and in the outdoor area.

- Eliminate the small number of incidents of low level disruption which occasionally interrupt learning by ensuring teachers apply the behaviour policy consistently in all lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires stated that they thought their children were making good progress. Overall, inspection findings show that progress is satisfactory. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. A concerted focus on the development of writing skills is beginning to contribute to better, but still satisfactory, progress. However, although satisfactory, the teaching of phonics in the Early Years Foundation Stage fails to motivate children or promote their enjoyment and optimum achievement. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, they achieve just below average levels of attainment. Attainment and progress in mathematics is better than in English although attainment has risen consistently since the last inspection. A successful system of intervention through small group and one-to-one support has contributed well to improved achievement in mathematics.

Pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in reading. Currently, standards in reading are just below average by the end of Year 2 but just above average by Year 6. Pupils know their letters and sounds and are able to attack new words confidently. They talk enthusiastically about reading and were keen to talk about books they have read. In a mixed Year 4, 5 and 6 lesson, pupils were able to refine their writing skills and edit their work using the computers. In another lesson, pupils identified imperative verbs and used them well in their instructional writing pieces. These lessons both ensured pupils developed their writing skills.

In 2011, boys' attainment was much better than girls and the school has taken

satisfactory steps this year to ensure this is being addressed. The gap is closing and girls are set to achieve improved results this year as a result of timely support. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. This is because the school has provided small group and one-to-one support which has boosted their progress. More-able pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress and are challenged to work at high levels in mathematics. This is not always the case in English. Pupils achieve well when they are stimulated by the activities presented to them, for example when persevering to solve mathematical problems.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers believe their children to be well taught. Teaching is satisfactory overall with strengths evident in the teaching of mathematics. The school's focus on developing speaking and listening is beginning to pay dividends in promoting better writing. Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive and, as a result, pupils gain in confidence and ask questions in lessons. Their contributions are valued by teachers, who give them time to reflect on their own thoughts, ideas and concerns. This style of teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. In a mathematics lesson in a mixed Year 2 and 3 class, more-able pupils discussed solutions to missing number problems. A sense of wonder was evident when one pupil suddenly realised the answer to a challenging question and exclaimed, 'I've got it, I've got it!' The others quickly gathered round excitedly to discuss the solution.

The planned curriculum has a positive impact on teaching, with a variety of themes and clear links across subjects. In a lesson in a mixed Year 2 and 3 class about Himalayan houses, pupils discussed what it would be like to live in a house in the Himalayas but also learnt about the geography of mountainous regions.

Where teaching is less effective, for example in the Early Years Foundation Stage, assessments made of children's work are not always accurate enough. Consequently, the amount of progress they make is not always clear. The quality of the teaching of phonics is inconsistent. Activities are sometimes mundane and do not provide timely visual prompts to support learning. Pupils do not all participate in whole class questioning. This results in teachers not gaining the information needed to re-shape tasks in light of pupils' answers. Questions do not promote pupils' thinking skills or probe understanding. Sometimes, time is wasted repeating work already covered. Teachers' marking of work is regular and comments are provided which guide pupils to make improvements. However, teachers do not always ensure that their comments are read or that pupils are given time to reflect upon them.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All parents and carers say that there is a good standard of behaviour in the school, although a few also say that their children's lessons are disrupted by bad behaviour. Inspection findings show that behaviour is typically satisfactory. Occasionally, learning is interrupted by incidents of low level disruption. This is usually because teaching does not stimulate and motivate pupils as well as it could and some teachers fail to apply the school's behaviour policy as consistently as they should.

However, there are clear procedures in place to manage behaviour and most pupils respond well to the sanctions and rewards in place.

Most parents and carers believe that the school keeps their children safe and are happy about the school's response to bullying. Pupils also say that any incidents of bullying are dealt with and they affirm that they can approach adults in the school confidently for help if the need arises. Older pupils are available in the playground as 'helpers' for younger ones and say that this is very successful in keeping everyone safe and happy at break times. Pupils clearly know how to stay safe when using the internet and understand what to do if there are any issues with cyber-bullying. Pupils are always willing to take on extra responsibilities in school and most have good attitudes to learning. Relationships with adults and each other are generally positive but occasionally a few of the younger pupils tend to squabble when working together in groups. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable benefit from arrangements that meet their needs well.

The school is well maintained and offers a safe environment for pupils. There have been no exclusions or racist incidents. Attendance is above average which is a good improvement since the time of the last inspection. Punctuality is well recorded and incidents of repeated lateness are followed up well. As a result, the vast majority of pupils gain a good start to the day.

Leadership and management

The areas for improvement set at the time of the last inspection have been tackled satisfactorily. Leaders and managers have raised attainment and accelerated progress although there are still some inconsistencies between subjects and year groups. There are now good opportunities for pupils to participate in mathematical investigations although the teaching of systematic skills to promote more successful investigation still requires improvement. The level of challenge for more-able pupils has been raised in mathematics but less improvement has been made in English. There is a variety of cultural opportunities available to pupils through the curriculum and consideration of spiritual and moral issues is also threaded well through assemblies. Leaders have promoted above average attendance since the last inspection. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory and gathering momentum. Currently, the quality of teaching and learning is beginning to improve because, through monitoring and evaluation, leaders have identified weaker practice and are moving it on. Governance is improving and statutory responsibilities are met including those for safeguarding. The school overcomes any potential discrimination and has a firm commitment to promoting equal opportunities for all. All pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are included in all aspects of the curriculum for example in extra-curricular clubs.

The headteacher's vision for the future of the school is shared across the school and all staff and the governing body are keen to drive forward improvements. There is an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and what requires improvement. Information from lesson observations is used to formulate professional development programmes for teachers. Plans are in place to provide support and training in the Early Years Foundation Stage to improve the quality of assessment.

The broad and balanced curriculum is enhanced by partnerships including those with other schools. Work to promote reading across the curriculum is beginning to bear fruit so that pupils are enjoying reading for pleasure as a result. Although there is evidence of pupils using computers to edit their work and undertake research, the teaching of computer skills is under-developed. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted in topic lessons where they are presented with opportunities to study the values and traditions of diverse cultures. The curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not always provide a sufficient variety of activities across the six areas of learning. Opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves, particularly outside, are sometimes limited.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



10 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mepal and Witcham CofE VC Primary School, Ely, CB6 2AL

Thank you very much for giving me your views about the school when I came to visit you recently. Your questionnaires, watching you in your lessons and looking in your books helped me to get to know your school. It provides you with a satisfactory education and these are some of the things I liked best.

- You enjoy coming to school and take a keen interest in most of your lessons.
- You have a clear understanding of what bullying is, and you say you are confident to speak to an adult.
- The headteacher and governing body do a satisfactory job in keeping you safe and helping the school to improve.
- Your achievement in mathematics has improved.
- Your attendance has improved.

We have asked the school to do the following things to make it even better:

- to ensure that you all prepare answers to questions in class and that those questions make you think hard
- to ensure that you learn something new in all your lessons
- to ensure that you are always actively involved in your learning
- to ensure that all the youngest children in your school learn their letters and sounds well and are able to choose lots of different activities to do both inside and outside
- to improve teachers' knowledge of how well you are doing
- to stop the small number of incidents of poor behaviour in lessons which prevent you from learning well.

You all can play your part in helping your school become even better by always working hard, concentrating in class and ignoring the few incidents of silly behaviour.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**