

Meadow Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111235
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	378258
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harry Ziman
Headteacher	Sarah Curtis
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2010
School address	Dolphin Crescent Great Sutton Ellesmere Port CH66 4SZ
Telephone number	0151 338 2450
Fax number	0151 348 1755
Email address	head@meadow.cheshire.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 17 lessons taught by 15 different teachers as well as some shorter sessions such as those assigned to guided reading. The inspectors held meetings with school staff, members of the governing body, three groups of pupils, one group of parents and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation related to pupils' progress and school management, including safeguarding. The inspectors also took into account the responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 168 pupils, 22 staff and 98 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The attainment of and progress made by different groups of pupils with a particular focus on writing in Key Stage 1 and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- The success with which the teaching uses assessment and other information to adapt the provision according to pupils' different needs, abilities and interests.
- The impact made by the school's leaders on raising attainment levels and pupils' achievement, and increasing the rigour of self-evaluation to drive forward improvement.

Information about the school

Meadow is a larger than average-sized primary school which serves a settled community on the western edge of Ellesmere Port. Most pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils that are known to be eligible for free school meals is much smaller than average. The proportion that has special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the number with a statement of special educational needs is low. The school has gained Healthy School and International School status. It provides before- and after-school care and a holiday club.

The headteacher took up post in September 2010, three weeks prior to the previous inspection which issued the school with a notice to improve. Since that time there have been significant changes to staffing, including the appointment of a deputy headteacher, and to the membership of the governing body. A monitoring inspection in March 2011 judged that the school was making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

A privately-run childcare setting operates on the school site. This did not form part of the inspection but a report of its quality can be found on the Ofsted website.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

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.

Meadow Community Primary is now a good school. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher have driven forward improvement at an impressive pace so that all groups of pupils now make good progress and achieve well. Overall leadership and management are good. Morale is high among staff and they work well together as a team. This is because clear systems are now in place to guide their actions, staff have received well-focused training, and the supportive atmosphere created by the senior management team encourages others to take on responsibilities. The school is successful in meeting its vision of 'Inspiring a love of learning.'

Children's skills on joining the Reception Year vary but are generally below those expected for their age, especially their communication skills. By the end of Year 6 attainment is broadly average in English and mathematics. However, largely due to weaknesses in past provision, there are gaps in pupils' basic skills such as spelling and problem solving that currently prevent attainment reaching higher levels. The quality of teaching is good overall, with a real strength in the marking of pupils' work. As yet, assessment information is not consistently used to best advantage, and the organisation of lessons, particularly for younger pupils, does not always provide them with sufficient focus to guide their independent learning. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, especially since the introduction of the new creative curriculum. They feel safe, behave well and their adoption of actions to support a healthy lifestyle is outstanding. Staff know pupils well as individuals and provide them with good-quality care, guidance and support.

Rigorous self-evaluation, based on accurate assessment of pupils' attainment and progress and regular monitoring of the school's provision, underpins all decision making. The governing body now plays a key role in holding the school to account, ensuring that the actions taken have a positive impact, and guiding the leaders' thinking towards planning for sustainability. The leadership at all levels is ambitious for the school's pupils and unflinching in its willingness to adapt its work in the light of emerging evidence. Such reflective practice, combined with the improvements already achieved, indicates that the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics so that pupils are better prepared for future success by:
 - ensuring that the current good rates of progress are sustained
 - improving the standard of pupils' spelling, sentence construction and handwriting
 - developing the ability of pupils in Key Stage 2 to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems.

- Ensure that teaching is consistently of good or better quality by:
 - increasing the precision with which adults use assessment information to adapt tasks and questioning in lessons
 - making clear to pupils the expectations of what different groups will achieve
 - improving the organisation of lessons in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils approach lessons with enthusiasm because they expect them to be fun. They say that, 'lessons are much more interesting than they used to be because you do different things all the time.' Older pupils in particular settle and co-operate well. For example, they allocate different tasks quickly when working as a team. However, younger pupils can grow over-excited, leading to noisy classrooms with too much unfocussed chatter. In Year 6, inspirational preparation of a 'crash site' of an unidentified flying object plus an 'eyewitness' video, enthralled pupils who worked hard in both numeracy and literacy lessons to gather and analyse evidence in different ways.

After a period when some groups of pupils were underachieving, all groups, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, now achieve well. In reading, writing and mathematics over the past two terms, the large majority of pupils in both key stages made twice the average progress expected over a similar period. Pupils' current work confirms their good progress has continued over one half-term. Overall attainment levels are broadly average but the engaging content of pupils' extended writing is too often let down by immature handwriting and inaccuracies in spelling and sentence structure. Older pupils are becoming increasingly confident in their use of different mathematical processes but are not yet sufficiently adept at applying these efficiently to solve problems. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work and they take pride in doing so.

Good-quality relationships underpin the school's happy learning environment. Pupils, staff, parents and carers all praise the significant improvements made in pupils' behaviour over the past year. Pupils are polite, helpful and the great majority is now able to settle disputes amicably and independently. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that effective steps are taken to deal with any concerns. They are keen to

achieve awards, to contribute their ideas, for example, to the content of the curriculum, and to take on responsibilities. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the benefits of adopting a healthy diet and the dangers of substance abuse. Unusually high numbers participate in a wide range of physical activities during lunch time and after school. Attendance levels are above average and punctuality has much improved over the past year. Pupils understand that their actions have consequences and they show a good awareness of the needs of others. However, their knowledge and appreciation of other cultures are not yet deeply embedded. Pupils' positive attitudes and average ability to apply their basic skills to different situations provide them with a satisfactory foundation on which to build their future learning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lesson planning is generally detailed, includes interesting activities, takes into account the abilities of different groups of pupils, and enables them to make good progress overall. In the best lessons, detailed organisation and anticipation of potential pitfalls ensure that pupils work with enthusiasm and purpose because the tasks and levels of questioning and support are so well-adapted to their individual needs. Such precise use of assessment information is not yet consistent throughout the school, however. Teachers share the learning objectives with pupils and lessons usually proceed at a good pace. On occasion, teachers expect pupils to listen for too long or do not make sufficiently clear what they expect different groups to achieve. A dearth of word-banks, dictionaries and thesauruses inhibits pupils' development of independent skills. In Key Stage 1, the organisation of lessons sometimes means that those pupils without direct adult input tend to lose focus and veer off task. Teaching assistants provide good-quality support ranging from small group work to individual input, for example, for pupils at an early stage of learning English. This improvement since the previous inspection is having a positive impact on pupils' progress, as is the high-quality marking that provides pupils with very clear guidance on the strengths of their work and what they need to do next to improve it.

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

Extensive improvements to the curriculum mean that it now effectively builds on pupils’ enthusiasms and enables them to develop their skills in a consistent, sequential manner. Former gaps in pupils’ knowledge and understanding are being filled. Pupils’ involvement in pre-planning days provides useful information about their current knowledge and interests which teachers use as a basis for their planning. It also develops in pupils a sense of ownership about their learning. This engagement has made a strong contribution to increasing rates of progress. An outstanding element of the curriculum is the large number and wide range of extra-curricular activities that staff provide on a voluntary basis, enabling pupils to broaden their experience and increase their delight in learning.

Staff’s good knowledge of individuals’ circumstances combined with information from the school’s robust assessment procedures quickly highlight any pupils who are likely to be vulnerable or are in danger of falling behind. This leads to good-quality support. An overhaul of the school’s provision for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities means that they all now have individual education plans that are precise, easy to understand and regularly reviewed. The nurture group makes good use of the new garden, developed by teaching assistants with support from local businesses, to promote the social and emotional development of small groups of pupils. In classrooms, worry boxes, helping hands and ‘emotions’ faces support pupils’ mental well-being so that they grow in confidence and self-esteem. The well-run out-of-school childcare provision is enjoyed and appreciated by those who attend. Good arrangements, including the ‘buddying’ of year groups, ease pupils’ transition into Reception, between key stages and on to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Over a period of one year, impressive improvements have been made to many aspects of the school’s provision and, as a consequence, to pupils’ progress, behaviour and enjoyment of learning. This is the direct result of the exceptional vision, drive and determination of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Through a combination of rigorous monitoring, extensive training and much encouragement, they have developed a confident staff team that has high aspirations for pupils and the skills to help them achieve them. Meticulous systems to track pupils’ progress inform the school’s searching self-evaluation and well-targeted actions. Five ‘roles and responsibilities’ teams, comprised of senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, administrative and midday staff, and governors, effectively divide the workload between different groups, leading to advances on all fronts and ensuring that improvement is sustainable. With some exceptionally committed members, the governing body balances well the elements of strategic thinking, probing questioning and whole-hearted support for the school.

Arrangements to safeguard pupils from harm have improved greatly in their stringency and effectiveness. They include innovative practice such as 'Safeguarding is Everyone's Business' cards that provide relevant names and contact numbers for anyone visiting the school. The promotion of equality of opportunity is now good, enabling pupils of different abilities and with different needs to be fully included in school life and to make similarly good progress in their learning. Strong partnership-working with the local authority and neighbouring schools has speeded the steps to improvement, whilst liaison with outside agencies effectively supports pupils who are more vulnerable. Parents and carers support their children's learning well through fund-raising, involvement in their child's homework and volunteering their help in school. The school recognises that, as yet, its promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory and it has already embarked on actions to extend pupils' first-hand experience of other cultures. Administrative and other support staff ensure that the school runs smoothly and leaders deploy its resources well.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Reception Year so that the majority join Year 1 with average skills overall for their age. Writing skills, particularly of boys, lag behind those in other areas. Children enjoy their learning because the good range of activities, inside and outdoors, engages their interest. Adults provide them with good levels of support through questioning and encouragement, particularly when working in groups. On occasion, the provision is not sufficiently well-organised to ensure that children engaged in freely-chosen activities are given sufficient support to maximise the opportunities for learning, especially their skills of collaboration and early mark-making. Adults closely observe children's development and interests. They use the information well to ensure that planning matches children's needs and interests. Warm relationships and the good attention paid to safety and well-being create a positive environment for learning and enable children to grow in confidence. Good partnerships with parents, carers and the on-site pre-school provision enable children to settle easily into school life. Although the Early Years Foundation Stage leader no longer teaches in this key stage, good-quality leadership and management ensure

that effective teamwork, monitoring and evaluation continue to promote good outcomes for children.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers completing the inspection questionnaire was slightly below average. The great majority of respondents hold very positive views of the school. In particular they are full of praise for the improvements made to pupils’ behaviour, the curriculum, marking, homework and channels of communication. The inspection team discussed with senior leaders the few responses to the questionnaire which expressed dissatisfaction about particular aspects of the provision. Their responses to these, plus the track record of improvement, assured the inspectors that the leaders will take any necessary action.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Meadow Community Primary 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 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 361 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	66	30	31	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	56	57	40	41	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	39	52	53	8	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	42	46	47	7	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	50	51	44	45	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	48	46	47	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	44	52	53	2	2	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)	43	44	43	44	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	40	47	48	8	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	37	56	57	4	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	37	52	53	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	47	48	47	48	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	53	41	42	3	3	1	1

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 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth-form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



7 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meadow Community Primary School, Ellesmere Port, CH66 4SZ

Thank you very much for the warm welcome that you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks should go to those of you who gave up your time to speak with us before going off to your exciting Halloween and Bonfire lunch. You, and others who chatted with us, helped us to understand what it is like to be a pupil at Meadow, and to come to the judgement that it is now a good school. It was good to hear that you feel safe in school and that behaviour has improved. Your adoption of healthy lifestyles is outstanding, particularly because so many of you take part in extra-curricular activities.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment levels in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. We have asked the school's leaders to make sure that the teaching helps you to improve your spelling, handwriting, sentence construction and problem-solving skills in particular so that you can reach higher standards, now that your progress is good throughout the school. You can help by trying particularly hard with these aspects of your work. We were pleased when you told us how much you enjoy learning because the lessons are so much more interesting now. We have also asked the leaders to make sure that the activities are always well-organised and provide you with the right level of challenge.

The senior leaders have been very skilful in helping the school to make so many improvements over the past year. They, the staff and the governors work well together as a team so it is likely that you and the school will continue to make good progress. This letter comes with our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Drake
Lead inspector

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