

Miers Court Primary School

Silverspot Close, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent, ME8 8JR

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors provide good leadership for the school.
- They work well together and have maintained the school's good performance since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make good progress and reach overall standards that are above average in reading and writing. Standards in mathematics are broadly average and are rapidly improving by the end of Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective support and make good progress from their different starting points.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and motivate them so that they learn well.
- Children get a good start to school in the early years. They quickly develop confidence and independence and make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and in the playground. They have good attitudes to learning. They are polite and friendly. Attendance is above average.
- Good safety arrangements ensure that pupils feel safe, are happy and are well looked after.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve. They hold leaders to account effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet typically outstanding. Some teachers do not always have high enough expectations of the achievement of the most able pupils in Years 3 to 6 in mathematics. As a result, these pupils do not always make the fastest possible progress.
- The school's agreed marking policy is not consistently used by all teachers to ensure that pupils learn as well as they can by knowing how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 22 lessons some of which were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work, looked at books, listened to some pupils reading and observed pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and staff with key leadership responsibilities. Inspectors had discussions with pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at the 98 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own survey of parents. In addition, inspectors looked at comments made by parents and spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also took into account 23 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bryan Meyer	Additional Inspector
David Boreham	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Provision is made for the early years in two Reception classes, which the children attend full time.
- There is pre-school and breakfast club provision on the school site. These are managed by private providers and, therefore, not included in this inspection.
- There is a children's centre on the school site which is subject to a separate inspection.
- Over the past 18 months, seven of the 14 class teachers have started at the school. Unexpected circumstances beyond the control of leaders have caused some turbulence in staffing. This has meant that some classes have had several teachers or supply teachers over the period.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in order to raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers' expectations for the most able pupils are high enough so that they learn exceptionally well in mathematics
 - all teachers use the agreed whole-school marking policy so that pupils in all classes know how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good leadership for the school. The deputy headteacher works very closely with her and together they form a strong team.
- There is a shared commitment and determination by leaders at all levels, including staff and governors, to provide the best learning and experiences for pupils. There is an accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to further improve its performance.
- Recently re-arranged and clarified leadership responsibilities have successfully energised all staff into an increasingly effective team.
- Middle leaders are effective. They know the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. Regular scrutiny of pupils' books, planning and checks on how well pupils are learning are used effectively to monitor pupils' progress. Leaders provide good guidance and support to colleagues as well as skills and expertise in their subjects.
- Arrangements for managing teachers' performance are well established and are effective. Teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress. Leaders take rapid and effective action where any weaknesses in teaching are identified and improvement is expected. There are good professional development opportunities to meet whole-school priorities as well as individual staff needs. There is not yet, however, enough teaching that is typically outstanding.
- Additional primary physical education and sports funding is used effectively to provide specialist coaching for pupils and to develop teachers' skills. Funding has also been used to increase pupils' participation in competitive sports, train staff in gymnastics and dance and improve resources. Pupils' well-being and understanding of healthy lifestyles are promoted well through the school's use of the funding.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to ensure that all eligible pupils achieve well. The funding is used in a variety of ways including to provide extra support in reading, writing and mathematics, in enrichment activities to support pupils' social and emotional needs and for additional resources to boost pupils' confidence and engagement in learning. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully to ensure that they catch up.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity well and are committed to making it possible for all pupils to fulfil their potential in a supportive, caring school without fear of any type of discrimination. Leaders are acting decisively to ensure that the most able pupils catch up in mathematics. All staff foster good relationships throughout the school and beyond.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum and the values of the school. Pupils learn about, and have respect and tolerance for, faiths, cultures and backgrounds different to their own. Leaders ensure pupils have a good understanding of British values such as democracy and understand the need for rules in school and the wider community. This helps prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The school teaches a broad and balanced range of subjects and continues to make changes to ensure that the requirements of the new National Curriculum are met fully. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Trips and extra activities including clubs add to pupils' experiences. Music, sports and art have a high profile in the school. There are many examples of impressive, high quality artwork displayed around the school.
- Parents are positive about most aspects of the school's work as shown in the responses to Parent View and the school's own survey of parents conducted in January 2015. A small minority of those who responded to Parent View and those who submitted their comments, expressed concerns, mainly about the number of different teachers in some classes. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have effectively managed the significant changes in staffing and have ensured that pupils' learning has not been compromised. This is evident from the improving picture of achievement for pupils in the current year groups. However, the inspectors and school agree that leaders should continue to make every effort to inform parents of changes.
- All safeguarding procedures and policies meet statutory requirements and are well known and implemented effectively by all staff to ensure pupils are safe.
- The local authority has, over the past six months, supported the school effectively, particularly to develop the skills and expertise of senior and middle leaders. It agrees with the school's own evaluation of its performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well. They are well informed by the headteacher and their own visits to the school so that they have a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement.

They are ambitious and determined to see the school improve. They know that teaching is good and what leaders do to tackle any underperformance. They ensure that pay progression is linked to pupils' good progress. They challenge leaders by asking probing questions to check the accuracy of information. They understand the school's performance information and how well the school's standards compare with other schools nationally. Governors have a good level of expertise and offer skills in a range of areas. Governors have a clear understanding of how the pupil premium and sports funding are spent and the impact they have on pupils' achievement. The governing body, with the support of the local authority, has conducted a self-review of its work and, as a result, has improved its effectiveness in holding the school to account for its performance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and when working with other adults outside the classroom. School records show that good behaviour is typical over time.
- Pupils are considerate and courteous and respectful to all staff and to each other. Pupils are friendly, welcoming and polite and happy and confident to talk to inspectors about their work and their school. There are trusting relationships with staff who are good role models in building a culture of respect.
- Pupils enjoy the social occasions in school. Pupils' behaviour was exemplary in the dining hall at lunchtimes and during assemblies. They enjoy their responsibilities in school and take them seriously. For example, some Year 6 pupils are trained as play leaders and do a good job in ensuring that playtime for younger pupils is an enjoyable and happy time.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning and usually work hard. This engagement with their work helps them to make good progress. On a very few occasions, when teaching does not fully engage pupils, some can lose their focus on learning and their concentration wavers. This is why behaviour is not outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy school and attendance is above average.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View agree that their children are happy at school and behave well. Staff also agree that behaviour is good.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school keeps their children safe and most think they are well looked after.
- Pupils spoken to say they feel safe in school and that the school helps them learn how to be aware of dangers and stay safe outside of school. Pupils promote safety well, for example, designing a competition about road safety issues.
- The school's safety procedures and the school site are very secure. The checks on staff working at the school are rigorous.
- Pupils say that any bullying in school is very rare. They are confident to turn to staff if any incidents should occur and know that adults would deal with them quickly. Pupils know that bullying can take different forms including cyber-based and prejudiced-based bullying.
- Pupils have a good awareness of e-safety and know how to keep themselves safe online. They know they should not give out any personal information and that it is wrong to say anything unkind or hurtful about other people.

The quality of teaching is good

- Relationships between staff and pupils are good and trusting. Pupils enjoy learning, work hard and want to do well. Teachers carefully plan activities to ensure that pupils enjoy learning in literacy, reading and mathematics and achieve well.
- Strong and very effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that additional help given to disadvantaged pupils and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supports the learning of these groups well and promotes good progress.
- Pupils learn to discuss and think deeply, especially in response to skilled questioning by adults. Teachers are quick to spot any misconceptions and deal with them straight away. For example, pupils writing a story in Year 2 were confused between metaphor and simile. As a result of the teacher's probing questions, they became clear about the difference between the two and made good progress in their

writing.

- Pupils say they enjoy writing. Boys, in particular, say that the process of creating plans for their stories, 'helps sort our ideas out in our head so that when we write it, it all makes sense.' Pupils' success in writing is due in part to an increasing enjoyment of writing and teachers' in-depth knowledge and accurate assessment of what pupils are doing well and what they need to do to improve.
- Reading is taught effectively. Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught well, including by skilled teaching assistants. Pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure and taught to develop and use research skills using a variety of resources including non-fiction texts and the internet. Reading for enjoyment is promoted well across the school and many read with fluency and expression. Pupils have a good knowledge of a range of authors and can express reasons for personal preferences.
- Purposeful mathematical activities motivate pupils' learning well. For example, pupils in Year 1 understood why they had to learn to measure hand and foot prints accurately in order to find out who had stolen their dinosaur.
- Teachers and pupils use displays and technology well to support learning. For example, 'working walls' provide pupils with prompts and reminders in literacy and mathematics. Classrooms are tidy and attractive and teachers are good role models for pupils who take pride in their work, which is presented well.
- Leaders have developed an agreed whole-school marking policy. There are some very good examples of marking and feedback. These are consistent with the school's policy and promote learning by giving pupils clear pointers on how to improve their work. However, the same quality of marking is not yet fully evident across all classes. As a result, some pupils are less clear about what they can do to improve, which hampers their progress.
- Teachers generally have high expectations for pupils' learning. However, although there is an improving picture of pupils' mathematical achievement, expectations for the most able pupils are not always high enough. As a result they do not always build rapidly on their skills and make the exceptional progress of which they are capable.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress from their different starting points.
- Attainment by the end of Year 2 in 2014 was above average in reading, writing and mathematics, demonstrating a continuing rising trend.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 also improved in 2014 in reading, writing, and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Standards were above average and considerably so in writing. Pupils did not do quite as well in mathematics, however, as their progress was not as rapid as in the other subjects and attainment was close to the national average.
- Evidence from the inspection, including pupils' workbooks and the school's assessments, shows that the current pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach above average standards in 2015 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Currently, across the school, the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently well in reading and writing although it could be better in mathematics. They make good progress. In 2014, by the end of Year 6, the most able pupils did well in reading and writing. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the highest available National Curriculum levels in mathematics was below the national figures.
- The school responded promptly to this and has taken effective action. This includes a focus on improving girls' achievement, the introduction of an online mathematics learning programme and further training for staff. The school's checks on progress show that pupils of all abilities are on track to do better in mathematics this year and the gap between boys' and girls' achievement has narrowed. However, although improving, achievement in mathematics, particularly for the most able pupils, is not yet as good as it is in reading and writing, as they are not consistently making rapid enough progress.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic check (the sounds that letters make) was above the national figure. Pupils use their phonic skills well to help them read unfamiliar words.
- The needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well met. They make similar good progress to others because their needs are identified at an early stage and appropriate support is provided.
- In the 2014 national assessments, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 was similar to other pupils in the school. Compared to other pupils nationally, it was similar in reading and writing and just over eight months behind in mathematics. In 2014, progress from their different starting points was better than other pupils nationally in writing, similar

in reading but not as strong in mathematics.

- Currently, disadvantaged pupils across the school make good progress in mathematics as well as in reading and writing because they receive effective support and gaps are narrowing.

The early years provision

is good

- Children in the early years get a good start to school.
- Children start in the Reception Year with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age although with lower reading and writing skills. They make good progress because of good provision and catch up quickly in reading and writing.
- By the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development is above average. As a result, children are well prepared to continue their education in Year 1.
- Teaching is good. Teachers challenge children to develop their skills in a very supportive and caring way but with high expectations. Activities are motivating and encourage children to develop a love of learning and enquiring minds. For example, children showed great determination to build a tower of bricks, counted the bricks and wrote a label to show how many bricks they used. This engaged children well, giving them a reason for accurate counting to 20.
- Children are proud of their achievements. Many were very enthusiastic to share sums they made up themselves and invited inspectors to buy items from their shop, carefully working out what change to give them.
- Children quickly develop a love of books and story. They understand that they can communicate their ideas through writing. They thoroughly enjoy making their own books, writing labels for their buildings as part of their topic work on 'Can we build it?' and learning new vocabulary.
- The outdoor area provides good experiences for children. Leaders have correctly identified further development of outdoor learning to enhance and enrich the provision in all areas of learning.
- Leaders have excellent arrangements for getting to know the children and their families before they start in the Reception class. This ensures that they settle quickly to enjoy their learning and rapidly develop confidence and independence. Strong links with parents continue throughout the children's time in Reception. Children are equally well supported to move into Key Stage 1.
- Staff in the early years work well as a team and have a good understanding of the needs of young children. Behaviour is good. Children show care and consideration for each other and work and play together very well.
- The leadership of the early years is good. Assessments of achievements in learning are used well to plan the next steps and take into account children's interests as well as their needs. This ensures that all groups achieve well including disabled children and those who have special educational needs and the most able children. Staff ensure that children learn in a safe and stimulating environment. There are good links with the children's centre and pre-school provisions.

WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118545
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	462721

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	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Marshall
Headteacher	Lisa Evans
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 November 2011
Telephone number	01634 388943
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