

Meadow Park Academy

Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 6BS

Inspection dates	13–14 January 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Achievement is not yet good because not all pupils make the progress that they should, particularly those who are most able.
- Older pupils have a weak grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar and this slows their progress in writing.
- Teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to plan work that is at the right level for all pupils.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their learning through investigations or problem solving in mathematics.
- Some teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to record their work independently and this slows their progress.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to develop positive learning behaviours such as independence, resilience and perseverance.
- Some leaders are new to their roles and the actions they have put into place have not had time to raise standards. They do not all provide clear feedback to staff when they check work in pupils' books.
- School leaders do not make enough use of all available information when setting long term priorities for school improvement.
- Some leaders do not focus clearly enough on what pupils are learning when they check teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders have taken decisive action to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. Consequently, pupils' attainment is improving and pupils now reach standards that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start because the activities provided for them are at the right level.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and they provide a high level of challenge to school leaders.
- The gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils is rapidly closing.
- The school provides good quality care to pupils. Consequently, they behave well and they feel safe in school.

Full report

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that a higher proportion is good or better, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information to plan work that is at the right level for all pupils
 - pupils have more opportunities to apply their learning, particularly in mathematics, in a meaningful context, so that they develop fluency and reasoning to solve problems
 - teachers extend the range of questions they ask to probe and deepen pupils' understanding.
- Raise pupils' achievement across the school by:
 - providing a higher level of challenge, particularly for the most-able pupils
 - ensuring that pupils master basic skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar by the end of Year 2
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to record their work independently so that they think more deeply about their work and develop positive learning behaviours such as resilience and perseverance when completing their work.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making better use of all available information to set priorities for school improvement
 - ensuring that leaders, including those new to their roles, are trained to provide clear and precise feedback to staff when they check work in pupils' books
 - ensuring that leaders pay more attention to what pupils are learning when they check teachers' work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- Despite some significant improvements to the school since the previous inspection, leaders know that more needs to be done to raise pupils' achievement. Although they visit classrooms regularly to check the work of teachers, they focus more on what teachers do rather than what pupils learn and so they do not always pick up on and address what most needs to be improved.
- Leaders have a broadly accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, they do not make enough use of all available information to pinpoint specific areas most in need of improvement. Consequently, the priorities set are not always those that will bring about the improvements needed.
- Some leaders are new to their roles and have not yet had time to make a difference to improving teaching. They look at work in pupils' books but they do not yet provide precise information to teachers about what needs to be improved.
- School leaders are enthusiastic and ambitious for the school. They have worked in close cooperation with the trust to address issues for improvement following the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement has improved so that standards are now broadly average. Decisive action was taken to improve teaching and so none is inadequate. Leaders check that all teachers apply the school's policies consistently so pupils now have a clear understanding of expectations.
- Systems to manage teachers' performance have been strengthened. Leaders hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make, and they make frequent visits to classrooms to check on how well pupils are learning. Leaders provide coaching and training to help teachers to improve their skills. Teachers understand that they have to meet challenging targets to progress on the salary scale.
- Equality of opportunity underpins the school's values. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on respect and trust so that all pupils feel valued and safe. Pupils get on very well together regardless of background. This reflects how well the school promotes respect and tolerance of those who have different faiths and beliefs. Leaders ensure that pupils learn without fear of discrimination and this helps them to prepare for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils study a wide range of subjects, although the main emphasis is on English and mathematics. Often subjects are linked together under an overall theme to give pupils a broader understanding of the world around them. A wide programme of visits and visitors add to pupils' interest and enjoyment, and also promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The academy is making effective use of the additional sports funding. It is spent in various ways to increase the range of sporting activities for pupils. Use of this funding includes provision of specialist coaches who help to develop teachers' skills and who also work directly with pupils to improve their performance. This has resulted in more pupils taking part in and enjoying a wide range of sporting activities.
- There has been a significant improvement in the way in which the school uses additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Funding is now targeted to provide specific support to disadvantaged pupils to address their particular needs. Some funding is used to provide additional help in classrooms and is also used to help eligible pupils with costs for school visits and uniform. Disadvantaged pupils are now making similar or better progress than other pupils. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the academy and also other pupils nationally is closing rapidly.
- The few parents who responded to the online survey Parent View were mostly positive about the school. They felt that the school was well led and managed and that leaders responded to any concerns they might raise. Most commented positively on the approachability of the headteacher.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has strengthened considerably since the previous inspection. Governors are actively involved with the school on a regular basis and hold school leaders to account for the quality of education. They are fully aware of what needs to be done to further strengthen teaching and raise standards. Governors are fully informed about the work of the school and visit frequently to check for themselves how well the school is progressing. They have increased the level of challenge to school leaders and hold them to account for pupils' progress. Governors know that systems to manage the performance of teachers are robust and ensure that only the best teaching is rewarded.

- Governors have a very clear knowledge of how the additional funding is used and the impact this is having on closing the gap between disadvantaged and other pupils. They have a good overview of how spending decisions are taken and ensure that the school provides good value for money.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff have a clear understanding of the school's systems to keep children safe. The school works in close partnership with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils are safe at school. There are effective systems in place to ensure that all adults who visit school are carefully checked. Governors check that safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Despite recent improvements to the quality of teaching, there is not enough that is consistently good across the school and this slows pupils' progress.
- School leaders have introduced new programmes to teach writing and mathematics. However, some teachers rely too heavily on these programmes and lack the confidence to adapt it for different groups of pupils. There are times when teaching is too repetitive, and pupils, particularly those who are more able, are not moved on to harder work quickly enough.
- Not all teachers use assessment information to plan their lessons. This means that the work they provide for pupils is sometimes too hard or too easy. There are too few occasions, particularly in mathematics, when pupils apply their learning to solve problems. Consequently, they do not practice and reinforce their skills to develop fluency and reasoning.
- Although teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and point to what needs to be improved, they do not always correct basic writing skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar and so pupils repeat their errors and do not progress as well as they should.
- There are some good examples of teachers asking questions to deepen and extend pupils' understanding. However, this practice is not yet consistent across the school and there are times when teachers ask questions to which pupils already know the answer.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their relative starting points. This is because staff are skilled in identifying these pupils' particular difficulties and provide focused support to help them. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and provide good support to these pupils.
- Throughout the school, teachers allow pupils to work in pairs to share their learning. This gives pupils confidence to respond to teachers' questions and helps them to learn from each other. Pupils demonstrate good social skills by listening carefully to each other and showing respect for each other's views and opinions.
- Teachers make imaginative use of resources to inspire pupils. For example, pupils in Year 1 were reading *Tom and the Island of Dinosaurs* by Ian Beck to help them to develop imaginative vocabulary to help them with their own writing. This was a challenging text that pupils, particularly boys, enjoyed. It helped pupils to understand why authors choose certain words when writing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **requires improvement**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff know pupils very well and quickly intervene when problems arise. They provide good care and guidance to pupils and they give high priority to their welfare.
- Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. The academy is successfully promoting their sense of belonging to the school community and this is raising pupils' aspirations and confidence. This is reflected in their attendance, which has improved and is now average.
- Staff are particularly skilled in supporting those pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. They work closely with a range of external agencies to ensure that these pupils and their families get the right support in a timely way.
- Pupils are friendly and helpful. They get on well together regardless of background. They respect each other and enjoy learning about the faiths, beliefs and cultures of those from other ethnic backgrounds.

This reflects how well the school promotes pupils' social, moral and cultural development.

- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that all adults are approachable and take their concerns seriously. They have a good understanding of what constitutes unsafe situations. They understand different forms of bullying but are adamant that should a situation arise, it would be dealt with quickly.
- Pupils know how to stay safe outside school. They know that it is unwise to give out personal information when using the internet and social media. All parents who responded to the survey agreed that their children are happy and safe in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. There are times when pupils do not always try their best and there are too few occasions for them to develop independence and perseverance in lessons.
- Although most pupils behave well when moving about the school, a very small minority are boisterous and run and shout inside school when they know they are not being supervised directly.
- Teachers all apply the school's behaviour policy consistently across the school and pupils understand what is expected of them. While most pupils do behave well in class, there are times when they lose concentration and begin to chat among themselves.
- School records show that there has been a marked reduction in the number of incidents relating to poor behaviour and the number of exclusions has fallen rapidly. Parents who responded to the survey and governors believe that pupils behave well and that there are few incidents of bullying.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because it is uneven across the school and pupils are not making rapid enough progress to catch up when they fall behind. A legacy of weaker teaching means that some underachievement remains, particularly at Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' attainment in reading is improving steadily. In the 2015 phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening check, pupils improved their scores from previous years, although they remain below average. By the end of Year 2 in 2015, pupils' attainment in reading also improved and is now broadly average. This is largely due to an improvement in the way that phonics is taught. Pupils currently in Year 2 enjoy reading and have made good progress from below average starting points. They use phonics confidently to sound out unfamiliar words and also recognise a good number of words by sight.
- In 2015, pupils in Year 6 improved their reading scores to reach levels that are broadly average. However, pupils currently in Year 6 have a weaker knowledge of phonics and their poor grasp of punctuation limits their ability to read with expression, fluency and confidence. Their progress from Year 2 has been broadly average.
- Work in pupils' books shows variable performance in writing. There are some examples of good progress, particularly for younger pupils. However, older pupils have still not mastered the basic skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar and struggle to present their ideas in a logical and clear manner. This is largely due to a legacy of previously weak teaching, which current teachers are addressing.
- In the national tests in 2015, pupils' attainment in mathematics improved at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 and is now broadly average. Most pupils progressed at expected rates. Work in their current books shows a strong focus on number concepts but there are few opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to deepen their understanding and this is preventing them from making better progress.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language progress at similar rates to other pupils. Teaching and additional support is targeted at their specific needs and so they quickly catch up with other pupils.
- The most-able pupils do not progress as well as they should. This is because they have the same work as other pupils and so there is not enough challenge or expectation that they can do more. This is reflected in the national tests where fewer than the average number of pupils reached the higher levels.
- Disadvantaged pupils across the school now make good progress. This is owing to recent actions to improve provision for these pupils. Their progress is carefully checked and they receive extra help in class to ensure that they do not fall behind other pupils. As a result of this support, the gap between this group

and others has narrowed and in some cases, disadvantaged pupils are doing better than others.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their relative starting points. This is because the support they receive is well organised and targeted to their specific needs. Well-trained teaching assistants work alongside them in class and help them to understand what it is they are expected to do.
- Pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

is good

- Children are warmly welcomed into a stimulating, safe and attractive environment in the early years. They feel safe and they behave well. Children develop good social and emotional skills and work and play happily together. Consequently, they learn well and get on very well together. Adults provide a high level of care for children and quickly spot when things are going wrong.
- Many children start school with skills below those expected for their age. Owing to the quality of teaching they receive, they make good progress across all areas of learning. This is particularly true of literacy skills, where they are learning their letters and sounds and using these accurately to read and write simple words and phrases. Consequently, they are well prepared for Year 1.
- The classroom is very well planned, with activities that help children to learn and develop through play and through structured activities led by competent staff. Children move confidently between activities and are clear about what it is they are expected to learn. There is a good balance of activities that are led by adults and those that children select for themselves.
- The day is very well organised so that adults know which children they need to work with and what they are expected to do. They observe children and record their achievements conscientiously and so are well placed to plan activities that are at the right level for children. Adults have high expectations and will insist that children practise specific skills, such as correct letter formation, before they move them on to another activity.
- Children are highly motivated and show perseverance to correctly complete a task. For example, one child had recorded the numbers one to 10 incorrectly on a small white board. When his error was pointed out, he independently chose to revisit the number line to correct his work.
- The early years leader has created a strong team, who have a good understanding of how young children learn. Adults are all fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and know what they are trying to achieve. The early years is well equipped with good quality resources both indoors and outside. This helps children to develop physical skills and good coordination.
- Provision and outcomes in the early years has improved owing to the way in which provision is organised. Staff are very responsive to the needs of children and so they progress at faster rates than other pupils in school.

School details

Unique reference number	138372
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10008172

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Walker
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Mark Frost
Telephone number	0118 937 5562
Website	www.meadowparkacademy.org
Email address	admin@meadowparkacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	16 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school and pupils are taught in single-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average and about a third of the pupils speak English as an additional language. Pupils come from a wide range of different backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The early years education is provided in two Reception classes and children attend full-time.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school became a sponsored academy in 2012 and is part of the CfBT Schools Trust.
- There have been significant changes to the teaching team since the previous inspection and several leaders, including the deputy headteacher, are new to their roles.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils working in 18 lessons or parts of lessons, most of which were observed jointly with school leaders. They looked at work in pupils' books and they listened to pupils read in Year 2 and Year 6. They observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and spoke to them about their view of the academy.
- Meetings were held with school leaders and four governors, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also met with a group of teachers and a representative from the CfBT Academy Trust. Inspectors met with groups of pupils formally as well as informally at lunchtime and breaktimes.
- Among the documents scrutinised were school development plans, minutes from governors' meetings and records of the school's own checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors also looked at information on pupils' progress and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing 18 responses to the online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also met with parents informally at the start of the inspection.

Inspection team

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