



Mere School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126263
Local Authority Wiltshire
Inspection number 293504
Inspection dates 30–31 January 2007
Reporting inspector Christine Huard

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Springfield Road
School category	Community		Mere
Age range of pupils	4–11		Warminster BA12 6EW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01747 860515
Number on roll (school)	170	Fax number	01747 861039
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rachel Porter
		Headteacher	C Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 30–31 January 2007	Inspection number 293504
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school which underwent re-organisation from a First to a Primary school in 2004. About two fifths of the pupils join the school in Years 3 to 6 – most of them in Years 5 and 6. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is above the national average and the school has a learning unit for pupils with complex learning disorders. The attainment of children when they enter the school is generally well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school providing an effective education for its pupils. The mission statement 'working together to do our best' is reflected in the commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors to listen to the views of pupils, parents and the local community in seeking to provide a broad and well-balanced education. The school has made sound progress since the last inspection and has successfully managed the transition from First to Primary School. Children in the Reception class make good progress and achieve well because they find learning fun and it is made relevant to their individual needs. Standards have risen year on year so that they are now average overall and pupils achieve well. The school has identified key areas where improvements are needed in order for standards and achievement to progress further. The emphasis on writing and understanding of punctuation is well reflected in teachers' planning and marking and in the good progress that pupils are making. However, spelling remains poor. Teaching does not focus on it sufficiently so it is not improving quickly enough. In addition, pupils have too few practical opportunities to practise their numeracy skills in other subjects. Pupils attending the specialist learning centre make good progress and receive good support. However, other pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. They receive good support on a day-to-day basis, but teachers do not always receive enough information from assessments to enable them to plan closely enough for these pupils' needs.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils love coming to school because, as older pupils told inspectors, 'it is friendly', 'there is no bullying' and 'there is always someone we can go and talk to if we have problems'. They behave well, have excellent attitudes towards their work and want to do well. They have an exceptional understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle and the need to stay safe. The care, support and guidance for pupils are good. Pupils are well looked after. The constructive help they receive for their academic and personal development enables them to do well.

The curriculum is good. There is a wide range of visits and visitors that adds to pupils' enjoyment of learning, as well as a good variety of enrichment activities, such as French, and clubs during and after the school day. Pupils respond well in lessons and learn effectively because they are interested in what is being taught. They enjoy positive relationships with their teachers and interact well with them. As a result, teaching and learning are good. Pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing in their work, because marking is informative and identifies pupils' progress towards targets.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership is strong. She works tenaciously to improve standards in both pupils' academic and personal development. The staff and governors are committed to further improvement. They know how well the school is doing and inspectors agreed with their self-evaluation. The school enjoys the strong support of parents. As one commented, 'Mere School offers the best in terms of education and support – long may it continue'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics by increasing the focus on spelling to improve pupils' writing, and by providing more opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their numeracy skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Improve the provision for pupils with learning difficulties by recording progress in a manner that enables staff to plan for pupils' next steps in learning more closely.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average and pupils achieve well. Children in the Reception class receive a good start to their schooling and make good progress, although most do not meet all the goals expected by the time they move into Year 1. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' progress is consolidated in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are a little below average, as few pupils reach the higher Level 3, particularly in writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6, standards are average and pupils achieve well. There are still some weaknesses in writing and numeracy. This is because not enough emphasis is put on correct spelling, and pupils have too few opportunities to practise their number skills in other subjects. Unavoidable factors influence standards and achievement at the end of Year 6. Many of the pupils moving into the school late in their primary education have emotional and social difficulties which affect their academic progress. In addition, pupils from the learning centre, although making good progress against their targets, make slower progress against National Curriculum levels. Overall, pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. This is because the progress of some pupils not attending the centre is recorded in insufficient detail. This means teachers do not always plan tasks that will enable pupils to make consistent progress towards their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school; this is reflected in the good levels of attendance and punctuality. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, with social, moral and cultural development being particularly strong. Pupils have numerous opportunities to take responsibility. Older pupils maturely care for younger children in and around the school, and contribute positively to the lunchtime 'eating experience'. They initiate and organise fund-raising events for national charities. The pupils' views are sought and respected. The Key Stage 2 School Meals Advisory Committee runs a healthy tuck shop each morning and was instrumental in organising the new lunchtime routines. The influential school council was a major contributor towards the organisation of anti-bullying week. They have many opportunities to utilise basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, which they will find important in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children in Reception find learning pleasurable because Joe the Crow, the class puppet, helps them to sustain their concentration. Pupils learn effectively because teachers show imagination in their planning in order to make lessons relevant and enjoyable for the pupils. Teachers' confidence and good subject knowledge allow them to be adventurous in the classroom. This is reflected in their enthusiasm and skill in using the interactive whiteboard to aid pupils' learning. Teachers have high expectations and encourage pupils to show initiative and independence in their learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They respond to questions thoughtfully and are encouraged to explore and share ideas with 'talking partners'. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide good support for the pupils. Marking is helpful to pupils and tells them how they can improve their work. However, there is not enough emphasis on identifying and correcting spelling. In addition, pupils find the 'traffic light system' useful in assessing their own understanding of their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for children in the Reception class comprehensively covers all the prescribed areas for learning. In Years 1 to 6, it is broad, interesting and motivates the pupils to learn effectively. The school's decision to use music, French and sports specialists during teachers' preparation time has greatly extended the learning experiences available to all pupils. In developing writing opportunities across a range of subjects, the school has made very good progress. However, the school has not yet extended this planning to mathematics in order to improve pupils' numeracy skills further. Personal, health and social education is well established and ensures that pupils gain a keen awareness, for instance, of the need to stay fit and healthy. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory and significantly enhanced by the Specialist Learning Centre, which provides very good additional support for pupils both in school and through outreach provision across other local schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The ethos of the school ensures that pupils feel valued and develop confidence from their start in the Foundation Stage and throughout the school. Staff are well trained in child protection, with effective procedures in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe and feel secure. Academic support for pupils is good and they are very aware of their targets in literacy and numeracy. Progress books provide an effective system for improving pupils' awareness of what they need to do to improve. The recording of progress made by pupils attending the Specialist Learning Centre is precise. However, the progress of the other pupils with learning difficulties is not shown in sufficient

detail to enable teachers to plan specifically enough for their needs. The school makes very good use of the local community and schools to support learning and ensure a smooth transition to future education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very good direction and her commitment to on-going improvement is shared by all members of the school community. She has managed the re-organisation of the school effectively, and worked hard to make sure that staff are confident in changed and unfamiliar roles by arranging training in areas new to them. Teachers with management responsibilities have a clear understanding of their role in monitoring the effectiveness of their subjects and areas. As a result, standards are rising and pupils are achieving well. There is a good capacity to improve further. Governors are knowledgeable and fully involved in the school. They show a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and make a strong contribution to strategic planning. The school monitors its own performance well. For example, writing was identified as a concern and the success of actions taken to improve pupils' punctuation and range of vocabulary is evident in the progress made by pupils, even though spelling remains a weakness. Rigorous monitoring of lessons and pupils' work assesses the quality of teaching and learning in order to ensure that pupils continue to make good progress. The school canvasses the views of parents and works closely with them, taking action to respond to their concerns where appropriate.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. We think your school gives you a good education and is working hard to make it even better. This is what we thought about your school.

- You behave well and are really keen to learn.
- You are all doing well in English, mathematics and science.
- You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise.
- Teachers make learning fun for you, and you know how to improve your work from marking and target setting.
- You have an exciting curriculum with lots of interesting activities, such as learning French.
- The teachers and staff take good care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher, senior staff and governors lead the school well and are very keen to make it even better.

- We think that a few things could be even better.
- You need to work even harder at your spelling to make your writing better than it is now.
- It would be helpful in giving you more confidence if you could have more chances to use your numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics.
- We have asked teachers to be more precise when recording the progress made by those of you who find learning difficult.

We are glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.

Very best wishes