

Meir Heath Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124145
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314820
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Nick Capron

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	384
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Powell
Headteacher	Peter Siddley
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Golborn Avenue Meir Heath Stoke-on-Trent ST3 7JQ
Telephone number	01782 393856
Fax number	01782 392755

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Meir Heath is a larger than average primary school. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are catered for in two Reception classes.

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. Children start school with standards in line with those expected. The work provided for them in the Reception class enables them to make satisfactory progress. Children enter Key Stage 1 with average standards. By the end of Year 6 the good teaching and curriculum offered enable them to make good progress and reach standards above those expected. However, progress is not even across the school.

Parents and grandparents are supportive of the school. The school hall was packed for the grandparents' concert. Comments such as 'My child looks forward to school – he bounces in and he bounces out – brilliant,' and 'There is time for every child – keep it up,' are typical of the overwhelming support expressed by parents.

Following the last inspection there has been good improvement. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now used much more effectively to support learning and exciting outdoor play areas for all key stages have been created. Pupils are very pleased with the way they are taught and enjoy their lessons, especially when they are really challenged and stretched. Their behaviour is good and they enjoy coming to school; as a result, attendance is good.

Pupils learn well and their needs are usually catered for effectively in the mathematics and English ability sets. However, on occasions work is not as well matched to pupils' needs as it could be. This slows the progress of the more able pupils. Adults at the school know the pupils well and pupils know whom they can turn to if they have a problem. Teachers track what their pupils are learning, but targets could be even more challenging for the more able pupils, especially in mathematics in Key Stage 1 and English in Key Stage 2. The school provides a good curriculum for the pupils and this is helping improve the quality of their writing in English.

The pupils play an active role in the running of the school. The school council acts in a very responsible manner and offers sensible suggestions as to how to improve the school, for example by helping design the new outdoor areas. The prefects are also good ambassadors for the school and helped grandparents to their seats during the carol concert. Pupils know they need to eat healthy food and need to take regular exercise. The good progress pupils generally make in English and mathematics helps them to be well prepared for the next stage of their education. The good teaching the children receive enables them to make good progress through the school, especially in Key Stage 1.

The headteacher and staff have worked hard to ensure the good curriculum offered to the pupils is exciting and ensures they enjoy their education and make good progress. Procedures to ensure all pupils are safeguarded meet government requirements. The headteacher has developed an effective extended leadership team and all members of the school contribute to this. Governors are supportive of the school, but could be more challenging to ensure that the headteacher is rigorously analysing performance to make the school even better. The school has good capacity to improve and gives good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The provision made for children in the EYFS is satisfactory. Children's skills and knowledge on entry to Reception are broadly in line with those expected for their age and are in line with national averages by the end of Reception. Progress in children's personal, social and emotional development and physical development is a strength and standards in these areas are slightly

above average when they enter Key Stage 1. Children enjoy school and build good relationships with each other and adults. Pastoral care is good and this supports their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

All areas of learning are well planned and provided for in the indoor area, but this is not reflected in the outdoor provision. There is not a dedicated area for Reception children to use and as a result this does not foster the children's independent work and play, and limits the 'flow' of their learning. The good range of learning materials in the classroom helps to make learning enjoyable and interesting. Staff create an appropriate balance of activities, with some led by adults and others that children can choose for themselves, though occasionally children sit for too long on the carpet and become restless. Children are taught satisfactorily and make the expected progress. Adults provide good role models for the children's language development, with a growing emphasis on phonics helping extend their reading and writing skills. Good links exist between parents and feeder nurseries and these ensure good transition and induction. The leadership and management are satisfactory with clear plans in place for further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the progress of pupils in Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics, particularly for the more able.
- Ensure that the outside area is incorporated effectively into learning opportunities for children in the EYFS.
- Improve teaching by ensuring pupils are given work that is appropriate for their ability.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well during their time in school. They enter the EYFS with levels of skills and abilities in line with those expected. They make satisfactory progress and join Year 1 having maintained standards in line with those expected. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach above average standards. Progress is not, however, even across the school, with greater progress being made in Key Stage 1 than Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

At the end of Key Stage 1, results have risen in reading, writing and mathematics over the last three years and are above average in reading and writing, but too few pupils are achieving the higher Level 3, especially in mathematics. By the time the pupils leave Year 6 their attainment is above average, particularly in mathematics. However, the school's provisional results for 2008 show that the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 dipped in English and mathematics. The school has rightly started to work to narrow the gap between reading and writing at Key Stage 2 and recent results show that this is working.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. The good relationships and way the teachers engage with their pupils ensure that behaviour is good. Assemblies develop the pupils' abilities to think about others, and in an assembly about Advent they thought carefully about how they would spend the money they raised from their 'giving' advent calendars, but too little time was

given to reflect on this. The use of circle time to address whole-school issues helps pupils to think and reflect appropriately on their actions.

When selecting their school dinners most pupils know the importance of making a healthy choice but children bringing a packed lunch to school are not as aware of the need to eat a healthy diet. Pupils know they need to take regular exercise and the employment of specialist sports coaches helps this to take place. Children know how to keep themselves safe and the school provides a secure environment for them to work and play in.

Pupils help with many activities around the school and in the local community which helps them to develop an understanding of their role in the wider world. Their work in raising money for local charities lead to the school being awarded the Staffordshire religious education award. Their awareness of other cultures is raised by visits to the local Gurdwara and the multicultural approach in the teaching of religious education. Each class has a garden area and during the summer, pupils grow their own crops and try to sell these at a profit. This acts as a good preparation for the world of work as well as developing a love of fresh vegetables!

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall. The teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and this enables them to engage them in their learning. ICT is now used well by both pupils and teachers alike to support learning. The teachers have good subject knowledge, though on occasions the teaching of phonics is less effective than it could be due to a lack of phonetical knowledge, which affects pupils' progress in English.

Ways are sought to bring learning to life. For example, when a teacher appeared dressed as the innkeeper from The Nativity and went into role, the children were fascinated, and were encouraged to ask searching questions to understand how she felt. This led to some good writing in English. Teachers mark pupils' work, but not enough opportunities are taken to use this marking to show the pupils what they need to do next to improve their learning. Pupils are set by ability for the teaching of English and mathematics. This helps teachers to match the work to the pupils' ability, but the more able pupils are not sufficiently stretched, which slows their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has developed a good curriculum. A wide range of activities is provided to enrich learning. All pupils go on at least one trip a year and the school regularly has visits from theatre groups and takes the opportunity to go to the theatre on a regular basis. Awareness of other cultures is fostered well through these trips and visits and the children talk enthusiastically about the visit of an African drumming group and multicultural weeks when they dress up and eat food from different countries.

The school is developing links between subjects to make learning more interesting, but this has not yet had a full effect on standards. Individual education plans are in place for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; they are supported well, and links with outside agencies are particularly effective in ensuring that this group of pupils make good progress.

However, the curriculum is not sufficiently developed to ensure the rapid progress of more able pupils.

Physical education is a strength of the school and pupils take part in a wide variety of sporting activities with considerable success. There is a good range of after-school clubs; however none of these are available to the very youngest pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Health and safety issues are addressed with rigour. For example, when it snowed during the inspection, staff were careful to brief pupils on how to play safely and not hurt each other in the playground. All adults in the school know the pupils well and pupils know whom to turn to if they have a problem. The pupils confirm that they always feel safe and pastoral care provided for pupils is good. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Relationships with outside agencies are particularly strong and these support pupils' learning needs well.

Targets are beginning to be shared with pupils, but this is not happening in all classes. The headteacher maintains a data set for all pupils to monitor progress, but the staff do not access this as often as they need to help them plan the next steps in learning for their pupils. Staff set targets for some pupils, but these are not always effective enough in raising standards, particularly for the more able.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has developed an effective system of distributive leadership that gives all staff a role in developing the school. Subject leaders have well-developed portfolios and produce action plans that are linked to good school self-evaluation and data analysis, and are leading to rising standards, especially in writing. The school regularly reviews its own performance to see how well it is doing and this ensures resources are targeted well at areas of need in the school. Pupils' with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because the provision provided for them is well led and managed. The school's governors are supportive and know the school well. They provide a good link and conduit to the local community, but they do not ask enough challenging questions of the headteacher and staff to monitor developments and progress.

The school knows what it needs to do to get better. It is at the centre of the community it serves and promotes community cohesion well because pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the worldwide community. The school has put in place effective systems to further raise standards and ensure progress is even across all classes and this is beginning to have an effect, especially where staff have been relocated to different classes. The school sets itself challenging targets and has good capacity to improve.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

4 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meir Heath Primary School, Stoke on Trent, ST3 7JQ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school last week. We really enjoyed our time in your school because you were all so polite and welcoming. I really enjoyed watching the Key Stage 1 carol concert and I could see how proud of you your parents and grandparents were.

I am pleased to tell you that you go to a good school where you make good progress. The way you played sensibly outside in the snow was very good – no one threw a single snowball and you concentrated on playing safely with each other! Your teachers are now better at using ICT and the way they use the interactive whiteboards helps you to learn better than when you were last visited by inspectors.

We were impressed with the way you helped around the school and especially the way the prefects helped at the carol concert and the work of the school council. You have opportunities to go on many interesting trips to help you learn. The specialist teachers who teach you sport help you to stay healthy and I was pleased that so many of you chose to have fruit with your dinner. The way you behave around the school is very good.

The headteacher and governors know what they need to do to make yours an even better school. I have asked them to:

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- improve the progress of all pupils in English and mathematics, particularly the most able
- ensure that pupils in Reception can go outside to learn more often in their own play area
- make sure your teachers give you work that really makes you think.

I hope it snows again this winter so you can make even bigger snowmen!

Yours sincerely

Nick Capron

Lead inspector