

## Mepal and Witcham CofE VC Primary School

### Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 110808              |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Cambridgeshire      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 325226              |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 8–9 December 2008   |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | David Wynford-Jones |

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.

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| <b>Type of school</b>  | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>   | Voluntary controlled   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>   | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>  | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>  |  |
| School (total)   | 82   |
| 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  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>   | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Mr Mark Newstead   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Miss Jane Green  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 26 September 2005  |
| <b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>                              | Not previously inspected                                     |
| <b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>   | Not previously inspected                                     |
| <b>School address</b>  | Brangehill Lane<br>Mepal<br>Ely<br>Cambridgeshire<br>CB6 2AL |
| <b>Telephone number</b>  | 01353 778300   |
| <b>Fax number</b>  | 01353 778300   |

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|--------------------------|-------------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small rural school serving two neighbouring villages. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage. Children in the Early Years/Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in a Reception class. There are no pupils learning to speak English as an additional language. A higher proportion of pupils than average joins or leaves during the school year. The percentage of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly similar to that in most schools. Most have been identified as having moderate learning difficulties. The school holds the Basic Skills and the Sports Active Mark awards.

A pre-school and a privately run after-school club use the school building. They were inspected separately at the same time as this inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This improving school currently provides a satisfactory quality of education and gives sound value for money. Much has been done since the last inspection to put systems and structures in place. However, these have yet to result in the pupils making academic progress greater than that found in most schools. The standard pupils attain by the end of Year 6 varies from year to year because of the small numbers in each year group but overall, standards are broadly similar to the national average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

There are signs of rising standards in writing because the school has made this a focus for improvement. However, standards in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 are not as secure. This is because pupils have not had sufficient opportunities to undertake mathematical and scientific investigations. In addition, the expectations, particularly for the potentially more able pupils, have not been high enough. The school is aware of these shortcomings and has already started to address them. These are being tackled through the introduction of more rigorous assessment procedures and the setting of challenging staff performance targets. The quality of academic guidance pupils receive is good. There are clear indications that pupils are increasingly aware of what they need to do to improve their work to reach their personal targets in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils do not make good progress because of the inconsistencies in teaching. Whilst there is some evidence of effective teaching, overall teaching is satisfactory.

A key factor in bringing about the positive changes is the vision and determination of the headteacher to provide the pupils with a good quality education. She has successfully promoted the welcoming and inclusive ethos of the school. Several pupils commented that attending the school was like belonging to a 'big happy family'. Some parents echoed this sentiment. In addition, there has been an emphasis on ensuring the school provides a good level of care, guidance and support and in promoting the pupils' personal development.

Pupils' personal development is good. It is promoted well through the satisfactory curriculum, which is effectively enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits. Pupils have a good understanding of being healthy and staying safe. They are increasingly contributing to the school's development through 'pupil voice' and the school council. Pupils enjoy school. They behave well and have a good understanding of right and wrong. However, their understanding of other faiths, customs and cultures is less well developed.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but with some strengths. The headteacher is providing clear direction based on a sound evaluation of the school's performance. Subject leaders are increasingly aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their particular subjects and have appropriate action plans to support developments. The recently appointed chair of governors provides a good balance between effective support and challenge to the leadership team. Systems and structures to monitor the work of the school are in place. As a result, the school is now well placed to move forward and has good capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Induction arrangements are good. Consequently, the children settle quickly, are happy and feel secure. Staff place a high priority on promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development. As a result, the relationships between adults and the children are good. The

children enjoy their lessons and behave well. They are developing their skills in working and playing together effectively.

Most children enter the EYFS with skills and knowledge typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress and most achieve the levels expected by the end of the Reception class. The children make the best progress in their personal development, communication, language and literacy and in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. This is because the school has given priority to these aspects. Children's attainment and progress are assessed and tracked carefully. The information is being used appropriately to support those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the assessments are not always used as effectively to raise the attainment of the more able children. The curriculum meets requirements and is planned appropriately to cover all areas of learning. The shared outdoor area is used satisfactorily to support learning and the children's social development. There are good opportunities for the Reception class and pre-school children to play together. This supports the transition process effectively. However, the size of the area and the lack of a canopy restrict learning opportunities.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve standards and pupils' achievement by offering more opportunities for pupils to undertake investigations in mathematics and science.
- Raise expectations by providing greater challenge for all pupils but particularly those who are potentially more able.
- Ensure the pupils develop a greater understanding of other faiths, customs and cultures.

A small proportion of schools whose effectiveness is judged as satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The 2008 end of Year 2 assessments confirms broadly average standards and satisfactory progress. Standards in mathematics continue to remain above those in reading and writing. Current teacher assessments show that overall standards are broadly average. Standards in writing are improving but there are potential weaknesses in reading. In mathematics, standards are broadly similar to previous years. The 2008, Year 6 provisional national test results also reflect broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. Progress from the end of Year 2 is satisfactory. Standards in mathematics and science were higher than in English. This is because of weaknesses in writing. The school has responded effectively to this and has successfully implemented strategies to improve pupils writing skills. Current standards in writing are close to the national expectations. However, in mathematics and science standards are not as high because many pupils do not have the required skills and knowledge to undertake investigations in these subjects.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support and this enables them to progress at a rate similar to their peers. In contrast, those who often find learning easy are not always challenged sufficiently.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their education. When asked why, one said, 'It's a small school, you get to know everyone, we are all friendly'. Pupils have a good understanding of being healthy and staying safe. They eat good balanced lunches and are keen to take part in physical activity. They behave well and are clear about school routines. The vast majority follow instructions well. Pupils are confident they can turn to an adult if they are worried. They say that issues will be dealt with swiftly and fairly. Although elements of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good, it is satisfactory overall because pupils' understanding of other cultures is less well developed. This leaves some with insufficient knowledge to be fully prepared for life in today's mixed society.

Pupils' contribution to the community is good. They act as playground friends; take on a good range of jobs to help the school run smoothly, and raise funds for local, national and international charities. The school council meets regularly and contribute to the school's development through 'pupil voice'. Average attendance and broadly average standards in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) prepare pupils satisfactorily for the next stage of education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Teachers manage their mixed aged classes effectively. As a result, classrooms are calm and industrious; this contributes to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Lesson planning is detailed. However, the focus tend to be on what the pupils are going 'to do' rather than what they are going 'to learn'. In some lessons, the expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. As a result, some pupils, particularly those who are more able, are insufficiently challenged. The electronic whiteboards are used effectively to support learning and have a positive impact on the quality of lessons. There are good examples of informative marking, especially in their English books but marking in other subjects does not provide the same level of guidance to support pupils' next steps in their learning. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own learning. This is leading to improvements in standards as pupils become clearer about what they have to do to improve their work. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together, particularly to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The school offers a broad curriculum which focuses on the all round development of its pupils. It is particularly effective in supporting their personal development through the range of after school activities, visits and visitors to the school. The systematic implementation of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEALs) project contributes much to their well-being. However, the school does not place sufficient emphasis on promoting pupils' understanding of other cultures and ways of life. The revised frameworks for literacy and numeracy are being implemented satisfactorily and this is beginning to raise standards in writing. Other subjects are taught through a theme or topic approach. There is a rolling programme to ensure pupils

do not cover the same theme twice. The school is rightly reviewing the topics to ensure there is a greater focus on the development of skills. French is taught to pupils in Years 3 and 4. This is to be extended to Years 5 and 6 in the near future. Appropriate use is made of supplementary materials to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good standards in art are evident in the many colourful displays around the school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care is strong. Pupils feel safe and know who to ask for help. Health and safety procedures are well established and the school complies with the latest requirements for safeguarding. Staff work effectively with outside agencies so they can help pupils who learn more slowly or who have medical needs to progress as well as their peers.

Good systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' standards and progress are firmly established and are being used increasingly effectively to identify pupils at risk of underachieving and to target support. Teachers set pupils targets to help them improve their work in reading, writing and mathematics. However, these targets are not routinely reinforced in other lessons.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher is focused on raising standards and enthusiastic about introducing changes, which will continue to raise standards and improve achievement. Subject leaders are developing as a team and carry out regular monitoring of their areas. Monitoring strategies for evaluating the work of the school are in place and are beginning to be used to bring about improvements. The school has a good range of data to help track pupils' progress and staff are becoming increasingly confident in using this information to identify any underachievement.

Governance is satisfactory. It is much improved since the last inspection. Governors have satisfactory systems in place to monitor the work of the school. Some are beginning to ask searching questions and use the information to set suitably challenging targets. The school development plan is clear and linked to raising standards and pupils' achievement. Parents are supportive of the school and a good start has been made to further promote links with the community. A detailed audit has been undertaken and governors have rightly identified that pupils do not have sufficient exposure to, or understanding of other cultures. Governors have not yet drawn up an action plan to address the issues.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3   |
| 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?  | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress                           | 3 |

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 3 |
| 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  | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

## The quality of provision

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 2 |

## Leadership and management

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 3   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3   |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 3   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 3   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated   | 3   |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 3   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 3   |
| 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**

10 December 2008.

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mepal and Witcham Primary School, Mepal, CB6 2AL

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit and talking to you. I was very pleased to hear that you like coming to school because, 'it is a very friendly place and the teachers are nice'. I agree with you.

Your teachers work hard to make certain that you are safe and well cared for, and to help you develop your good understanding of healthy living and staying safe. I was pleased to see that you behave well and make a good contribution to the community. I was a little disappointed to find that your knowledge and understanding of other faiths, customs and cultures was not as well developed as other aspects of your personal development. Therefore, I have asked your teachers and the school governors to make certain that you are given more opportunities to find out about the different ways of life of people in Britain today. This will help you when you travel away from home.

Overall, the school gives you a satisfactory education. You make satisfactory progress during your time in school. The standards you reach in English, mathematics and science are similar to those found on most schools. Recently you have been making better progress in your writing. Well done! Looking at your work in mathematics and science, I think you could do a little better. I have asked your teachers to include more investigations and to set you harder work. I know you will enjoy that.

Remember, you too can play your part by always working hard, by continuing to behave well and by taking an active part in the school and local community.

Good luck for the future.

With best wishes

David Wynford Jones

Lead inspector