

Mereworth Community Primary School

39 The Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME18 5ND

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher is an excellent leader and inspires staff and pupils to do their best. The governing body has increased its role in supporting the school and holding it to account. As a result the school has made good improvements in all areas arising from the last inspection.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress overall. Some make outstanding progress. Attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- In most classes, teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers make sure that pupils know what they are learning and the steps they need to take, and so pupils learn quickly and well.
- Provision in Reception is good and so children get off to a good start. From starting points that are broadly typical for their age, they make good progress.
- Pupils have exemplary attitudes and this has a positive impact on their progress. The school is a safe and happy community and pupils enjoy learning. This is reflected in their above average attendance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not high enough to ensure that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress. Occasionally, pupils are not given enough guidance on how to meet their targets and marking in Key Stage 2 is not always of consistently high quality.
- A small minority of pupils do not make consistently good or better progress especially in writing. Not all pupils in Years 1 and 2 are given enough opportunities to practise their writing skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons or part-lessons taught by nine teachers.
- Lesson observations were shared with senior leaders. Short visits were made to observe the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make).
- Work in pupils' books was analysed with a senior leader.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, evaluations of the school by outside consultants, minutes of meetings of the governing body and its different committees and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors met with different groups of pupils, interviewed a sample of staff, and spoke to parents and carers. They also spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents and carers were sought at the start and end of the school day, and through the school's surveys. Inspectors considered the 55 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered written comments from 26 staff.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Carol Vant

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action or school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- Since the last inspection, the leadership team has changed with a new headteacher appointed in June 2010. There have also been changes to the membership of the governing body.
- The school works in partnership with two local primary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress across the school, by teachers:
 - ensuring greater consistency in marking and feedback, especially in lower Key Stage 2, so that pupils know what they do well and what they need to do to improve
 - providing more precise guidance to pupils on their targets and more opportunities for them to demonstrate new skills in meeting these.
- Further improve achievement in writing by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils in Year 1 and 2 to practise writing so that they improve their use of vocabulary, punctuation and spelling
 - using information on how well the pupils are doing to set work that is always at the right level of difficulty for individuals.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children arrive with skills typical for their age when they join the Reception class. They experience stimulating and varied learning opportunities and as a result they quickly learn how to work on their own. Well-planned support from adults ensures that they make good progress. For example, they enjoyed taking part in a science investigation which helped them think about fair tests in racing cars, as well as developing their understanding of place values in deciding who came first or second.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been above average at Key Stages 1 and 2 over the last three years. School data and national data show that pupils across the school make at least good progress.
- Following a dip in writing standards in Year 6 in 2012, progress in writing is now beginning to improve. Opportunities to write are frequent in Key Stage 2, especially in Years 5 and 6. For example, Year 5 effectively adapted their extended writing in the style of an author. They made good use of computers to help them edit and refine their writing. They were helped by the teacher providing success criteria and ideas to extend their learning. However, pupils in Key Stage 1 are not always given enough opportunities to extend their writing skills and so develop their spelling, punctuation and use of vocabulary. As a result, progress in writing slows for a small minority of pupils.
- Pupils have made rapid gains in their progress in mathematics. A recent focus on teaching mathematics has ensured greater consistency across the school. Year 1 developed a good understanding of doubling numbers because the teaching was fun and practical. Pupils made good progress because the activities and teaching materials were well matched to their needs.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least the progress expected of them and most make good progress. Good support in class and in small groups also ensures that the needs of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding are equally well met. Some achieve better than similar groups of pupils nationally and gaps between their achievement and that of other pupils in the school are closing.
- Pupils show extremely positive attitudes in lessons. They concentrate well and are eager to learn. Year 6 pupils, for example, were totally absorbed as they took on the role of forensic scientists to help investigate a crime scene. The activity enabled them to develop a high level of skill as they investigated a wide range of evidence using different forensic techniques. They considered evidence such as blood spatter patterns and fingerprints. In lessons like this learning is fun and challenging and leads to outstanding progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good with examples of outstanding practice. This is resulting in pupils making good, and improving, progress over time.
- The best teaching is characterised by enjoyable learning activities which engage the pupils, with careful explanation of what is expected and what would be successful learning. This ensures that pupils' needs are well met. As one pupil said, 'Mereworth is a good school because the teachers are inspiring and we all learn a lot.'
- A positive climate for learning is supported by lively and vibrant displays around the school and in classrooms.
- In one lesson observed during the inspection, Year 4 made outstanding progress in understanding what made objects aerodynamic during a science workshop. Regular referral to expectations for learning and effective questioning by the teacher helped them use and apply new language as they performed a fair test.
- Pupils learn early reading skills quickly as they are placed in small groups according to ability rather than age. Well-structured teaching of letters and sounds ensures that many make rapid

progress. Pupils read regularly in school and at home and make full use of the extended library. Writing is also taught well, though work is not always set at the right level of difficulty for individual pupils. Progress is slowed when teachers do not make best use of the pupils' previous learning to increase the pace of the lesson. Opportunities for younger pupils to practise their writing skills are too infrequent.

- Marking and feedback often provide detailed guidance to pupils about their next steps in learning. Regular checking of learning during lessons helps pupils to think about how well they are doing in relation to their individual targets. Feedback is of high quality in Years 5 and 6. However, this is not yet consistent across the school, particularly in lower Key Stage 2. Pupils are not always familiar with their individual targets and occasionally do not get sufficient guidance on how to meet these.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They have positive attitudes towards learning, and are extremely polite, respectful and helpful to others and visitors. Their enthusiasm makes a strong contribution to their learning. All aspire to the school's code 'good to be green' where pupils who stay focused all through the lesson are rewarded.
- Pupils are well looked after by the school. The breakfast club provides a caring, friendly environment where pupils of all ages can enjoy a healthy breakfast and play with friends. The adults that manage the club know the children well and ensure that their preferences are taken into account with both food and activities.
- Pupils feel safe and show a sensitive awareness of how to keep themselves safe. For example, they know how to avoid cyber bullying, are taught the rules of e-safety and make use of these each day. They say that there is no bullying. Parents and carers and staff agree with this view and inspection evidence supports this.
- Pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities across the school. They are very proud of their school. The very effective school council ensures that the voice of the pupils is regularly heard and responded to. For example, the varied playground equipment reflects the needs of the pupils and provides an effective environment for cooperative play. Year 6 pupils act as play leaders so that pupils make the most of their break times.
- Parents and carers speak very positively about the warm welcoming 'village feel' to the school. Staff also speak highly of the standards of behaviour. School records support this, showing a very small number of incidents of poor behaviour over several years. The school has not had to exclude any pupils during this time.
- The school has worked hard in partnership with parents and carers to maintain high levels of attendance over the last two years.

The leadership and management are good

- There have been considerable improvements in the school since the previous inspection. Leadership is strong and decisive and the headteacher works successfully with the able governing body and in partnership with the local authority. Partnerships have been established with two local schools and this has helped to raise the quality of teaching. Joint moderation activities where the schools check pupils' work have ensured that the marking of pupils' work is robust and accurate.
- The headteacher has organised the staff so that leadership roles are shared. There is close collaboration so that all staff contribute to monitoring the improvements in teaching and the progress made by pupils. Consequently staff morale is high and the school has an accurate picture of its performance.
- Opportunities for staff to improve their teaching are provided through the links with their partner schools. Teachers also plan and teach together so that the quality of teaching is improving. Further partnership work is planned to contribute to the increase in the amount of outstanding

teaching. A robust system of checking how well teachers are doing results in appropriate increases in salary reflecting high performance.

- Pupils are given opportunities to develop their creative and artistic skills, such as through the individual tuition for different instruments as well as the school orchestra. They participate in a wide range of different lunchtime and after-school clubs. In addition, the school makes effective use of visits to further support the learning. This, together with a rich and stimulating range of activities during lessons, contributes to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Changes to the school environment have helped to enrich the pupils' learning experiences. Examples of pupils' work, three-dimensional displays and aids to learning are found in all classrooms and outdoor learning areas. The playground has additional areas which encourage cooperative play and the development of group social skills. This includes climbing frames, a stage area and a polytunnel for growing vegetables.
- The school promotes equal opportunities effectively through its attention to individual needs. Leaders ensure that discrimination is not tolerated, so the school is harmonious and inclusive. As one parent or care said of the headteacher, 'She is a headteacher for the pupils, for the parents and for the staff.'
- Parents and carers speak highly of the changes made over recent years. They are regularly involved in workshops which help them support their children with home learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide effective support for the school's ambitions. Following a period where there were several changes of headteacher, the governing body was reconstituted with new members recruited for their experience and expertise which they use well, along with the detailed information provided by the headteacher, to hold the school to account. They allocate funding well to support pupils' progress and other improvements within the school. For example, pupil premium funding has been allocated to ensure that it has a positive impact on pupils' achievement and well-being. Governors attend training according to their needs. In addition, regular opportunities are taken to update their knowledge within school, including sessions on understanding data and the new performance management arrangements. This ensures that they have a well-informed oversight of how well the school is performing in comparison to other schools, and helps to ensure that all statutory requirements are in place, including those related to safeguarding.

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	118307
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	405761

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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Bolsin
Headteacher	Diane Moore
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2010
Telephone number	01622 812569
Fax number	01622 815532
Email address	office@mereworth.kent.sch.uk

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