

The Meads Primary School

Sawtry Close, Luton, LU3 2UE

Inspection dates 16–17 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress. Standards in reading and mathematics are above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Teaching is good across the school. Lessons are well planned. Teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and provide them with useful feedback.
- Behaviour is good in classrooms and around the school. Pupils say that they feel safe. They enjoy their time in lessons and in a wide range of after-school clubs.
- Because the school promotes British values very well through its curriculum, the pupils are aware of what they mean and how they can demonstrate them. All teaching staff reinforce these values regularly. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Senior leaders have a very clear understanding of what the school needs to do in order to continue improving. They lead by example and, by successfully raising the quality of teaching, achievement has improved.
- The Early Years is well led and provides children with a good start to their education.
- Governors provide both challenge and support to school leaders. The governing body monitors the school's work well and is ambitious for its improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in writing are in line with the national average but do not match those that pupils are achieving in reading and mathematics.
- There is too much variation in the impact of teaching assistants on learning. Some teaching assistants provide very high quality support and make a substantial difference to achievement. In contrast, others have too little impact and miss opportunities to promote learning.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted without notice.
- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, each for around 30 minutes. They also visited classrooms for shorter periods of time to observe pupils' behaviour, look at their work and listen to them reading.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, class teachers, two members of the governing body and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to discuss their work and how the school keeps them safe. Inspectors also spoke with groups of pupils in the playground and during break times.
- Only five parents responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, which is too few to draw meaningful conclusions. Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took into account the school's recent questionnaire which had received 245 responses.

Inspection team

Christopher Moodie, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Graham Gossage

Additional Inspector

Jane Brothers

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Meads is much larger than the average primary school.
- Seven new class teachers and a new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2014.
- The proportions of pupils supported through a statement or an education, health and care plan are in line with national averages.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages.
- Pupil mobility is high. This means that significant numbers of pupils join or leave the school at points other than the normal starting or leaving times.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of writing across the school so they match those that pupils attain in reading and mathematics.
- Ensure that all teaching assistants promote learning effectively during lessons and when providing additional support.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, well supported by an effective senior leadership team, has improved teaching so that pupils' achievement is now better than at the previous inspection. Leaders know their school well because they make regular visits to classrooms and are highly visible around the school. They share their knowledge well with other members of the leadership team and with governors, and make good use of it to focus on the areas where more improvement is needed.
- Senior leaders have acted decisively to tackle some weak teaching that led to underachievement in 2013. The intervention halted the decline and achievement has improved.
- The school's assessment systems provide leaders and class teachers with a clear understanding of how well individuals and groups of pupils are doing. The systems allow pupils who are underachieving to be identified quickly, and support provided if necessary. Senior leaders monitor assessment information effectively.
- The school has begun to implement its new assessment systems following the removal of National Curriculum levels. The new system is at an early stage of implementation and is under review.
- A revised curriculum was set up last year to prepare the school for the new National Curriculum. This is now in place across all year groups. The curriculum meets requirements and is suitably broad and balanced. The school's values are integrated into the curriculum and are a common theme in lessons. Leaders have high expectations of staff as role models. They reinforce the school's values at every opportunity. Teachers and teaching assistants follow suit and this leads to a shared commitment to preparing pupils for their next stage of education and for life in modern Britain.
- Middle leaders are effective in promoting the school's improvement agenda with class teachers. Year group leaders are well informed about assessment data and know the pupils well. They ensure that teachers new to the school are very well prepared for teaching at The Meads, and provide effective help and support to ensure that pupils' achievement continues to flourish.
- The arrangements for the induction of new pupils are good. Many pupils join the school during the school year. These pupils are involved in an induction programme which integrates them well into life at The Meads.
- The school's procedures for safeguarding meet requirements. Effective systems are in place to ensure that the necessary checks have been undertaken before staff begin work at the school. Child protection training is up to date and teachers who have recently started work at the school are familiar with procedures.
- Effective use is made of the pupil premium funding. Disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium have made very good progress because of the interventions that have supported and accelerated their learning. The school commissioned a review of its work in this area and has acted quickly on its recommendations which identified the strategies that were working well and those which weren't. The good practice in Years 2 and 6 is now extended to all year groups.
- Primary school physical education and sports funding is spent effectively. An external group provides coaching and physical education teaching of a high quality. Pupils are very enthusiastic about these lessons and the take up of extra-curricular sport is very high, supporting the development of a lifelong sporting habit.
- Senior leaders make good use of a range of information to manage the performance of teachers. They hold teachers to account for pupils' achievement and set ambitious targets for them.
- The local authority has provided effective support for the school to raise the quality of teaching. It has a high regard for the school and its capacity to continue improving.

- Inspectors spoke to parents in school and at the start of the day. Responses were overwhelmingly positive about the school, citing the caring atmosphere and the commitment of the teaching staff as specific areas worthy of comment. The school's own questionnaire, conducted in March 2014, indicates very high levels of satisfaction with the school and its work. Of the 245 responses, 95% would recommend the school to other parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well led by the Chair. They are organised and clear about their functions. They effectively hold the headteachers and other leaders to account for the school's performance.
 - The governing body is increasingly well informed about the work that the school does because of governors' appropriate and well-judged presence in school. During the inspection, for example, two governors were conducting a tour of all classrooms; they were meeting with teachers and pupils to ensure that the new school year had got off to a good start, and that new staff and children had settled well into the school's routines. The information arising from such visits is relayed to the full governing body and informs the questions that they then put to senior leaders.
 - Governors check on the school's safeguarding procedures and review key policies, such as child protection, on an annual basis. There is a clear structure for reviewing all policy documents.
 - The impact of additional funding that the school receives, including pupil premium funding, is carefully evaluated by the governing body. School finances are closely monitored and planning for the future is part of the annual cycle of work undertaken by the governing body.
 - Governors take account of pupils' achievement when making decisions about teachers' pay progression.
 - Governors are keen to ensure that all communities and faiths within the school are represented through visits and assemblies.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The overwhelming majority have positive attitudes to their learning and this is a contributory factor in their achievement. Disruption in lessons is rare and is well managed where it does occur. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the consequences if they break the school rules or fail to demonstrate the school's values.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils are confident in the school's systems and know who to turn to if they need support or guidance. Risk assessments are undertaken for visits and trips, and pupils' well-being is a central element of the school's work. Where pupils may be vulnerable or showing signs that intervention is needed, school staff are vigilant and responsive to the pupils' needs. They are clear on the school's procedures and follow them well.
- Pupils make a strong contribution to the culture of the school. The 'Mead Makers' are a group of pupil volunteers with specific tasks that help to improve the school. They are universally proud of their role and set a great example for other pupils. Two such pupils, observed monitoring the numbers of children who had made a healthy choice and come to school on a scooter or a bike, were asked how often they did it, and why. 'We do it every day, and we're going to do it all year. We do it because we're Mead Makers,' was the proud reply.
- This sense of shared commitment runs through the school and is visible in the dining hall, where pupils help one another. It is apparent in the corridors where doors are held open for staff and pupils alike, and the use of 'please' and 'thank you' is common practice. It is there in the playgrounds where pupils play happily and told inspectors that very few problems occur; those that do are sorted out swiftly.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now slightly better than the national average. Rates of persistent absence remain at the national level. Exclusion rates are low when compared to national figures.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what bullying is and the different forms that it takes. They have been taught how to stay safe when they are using the internet at a level which is suitable for their age.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan interesting and engaging lessons which promote learning. Tasks and activities are pitched at the right level for pupils and their work is well marked. As a result, pupils enjoy the great majority of lessons and they make good progress.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils, both in terms of their attitudes and their learning. Pupils are expected to work hard, to be resilient and to find solutions to problems. Many pupils, and especially the most able, thrive on these expectations and work hard to realise their potential.
- Pupils' work is assessed regularly. Each half term, teachers provide an assessment of every pupil's attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. This is done accurately by the majority of teachers. In a small number of cases teachers assess pupils' work with too much caution and so underestimate the standards being achieved. Teachers have since re-assessed this work accurately.
- Teachers set homework that is appropriate to the age of the pupils. Some of this is activity and research based, and pupils enjoy the opportunity to find things out. The most-able pupils in some classes receive homework that is very challenging, but this is not consistent across the school.
- Pupils receive high quality feedback about their work. In all year groups, teachers also involve pupils in self-assessment. Pupils use a colour code to let teachers know how confident they are about their learning. This feedback is then used effectively by teachers to amend the next lesson or to provide additional support.
- Lessons run smoothly and pupils respond quickly to their teachers' requests and instructions, so little time is wasted. Resources are well organised and teachers make appropriate use of laptop and tablet computers to aid learning.
- Additional support for disadvantaged pupils is highly focused and is effective. Extra tuition is closely monitored and progress in these sessions is rapid.
- Some teaching assistants, in particular the high level teaching assistants (HLTAs), provide very good quality support. They actively promote learning and look for opportunities in lessons to extend or embed understanding, working in partnership with the class teacher for the benefit of the pupils. In contrast with this, there are a number of teaching assistants who are less effective and who have much less impact on learning. This is because they do not look for opportunities to promote learning and spend too much time helping pupils who are capable of working without this support.
- Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. The interventions and support that are provided by the school are effective and this means that many of these pupils make better than expected progress.
- Classroom teaching is well supported by the BEST team (Behaviour and Emotional Support Team). The staff in this team work very well to identify and support pupils who are either vulnerable or may present challenging behaviour. These pupils also make good progress and value the support that they receive.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils enter the school with knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years and Key Stage 1, and the standards they attain are in line with national rates by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. In all year groups in Key Stage 2, standards in reading and mathematics are above age-related expectations. Although standards in writing are not as strong, they are in line with age-related expectations and are improving quickly.

- Pupils who left the school at the end of Year 6 in 2014 achieved well. They made good progress and many more achieved the higher levels than in the past. This represents a significant improvement on 2013 when achievement declined. The actions taken by the school to tackle weak teaching during 2012 were unable to prevent the legacy of underachievement leading to the decline in 2013. These actions did, however, raise standards across the school leading to the best results the school has ever recorded in 2014.
- The most-able pupils are making good progress. Teachers are increasingly providing challenging tasks and work for them, and specialist teachers are supporting them in mathematics. These pupils told inspectors that they were motivated to do their best, and were aiming for the highest levels that they could attain.
- The school's teaching of reading is effective. A range of strategies are employed to ensure that pupils are able to recognise letters and link them to sounds from an early age. More-able pupils are challenged well and make swift progress. This means that some young pupils, who have just entered Year 1, are able to read unfamiliar words such as 'support' and 'partner' by using the knowledge and skills they have learned. Pupils are making good use of these skills across the curriculum to aid their learning on other subjects.
- As a result of highly focused interventions and additional support, pupils eligible for the pupil premium are often making two years' progress in one year. The gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally are narrowing but are not yet closed. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were one year behind other pupils in reading and mathematics and two terms behind them in writing. Interventions, previously focused on Year 6 and Year 2, are now in place for all year groups and the positive impact is apparent.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups make good progress. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6, their achievement is the same as other pupils.
- Pupils are positive about their learning and enjoy lessons. They respond swiftly to their teachers' guidance and lessons proceed in a purposeful and calm manner.

The early years provision

is good

- Children enter the Reception classes from a wide range of nursery and pre-school provision. For a small number, this is their first experience of education. They settle very quickly into clear routines and are happy to attend school. Despite the inspectors arriving during the first week that all children were together in the unit, the environment was very calm and children were ready to learn. The Early Years unit is bright, welcoming and well resourced. It provides an exciting environment for children to learn in.
- Teaching is clear and well planned. Teaching assistants work effectively alongside teachers to meet the varying needs of the children. Children who join the school with little experience of speaking English are supported very well, and make quick gains in learning the language and take part in all activities.
- The Early Years unit is organised well and provision is made for all areas of learning. An attractive outdoor area is available for children to learn in and explore through play. The school's values are as prominent in the Reception classes as they are elsewhere, and teaching staff waste no time in introducing and reinforcing them wherever they can. As such, children become used to the attitudes that are expected of them and this contributes to the speed at which children settle into the unit.
- Leadership in the Early Years is good. The leader makes effective use of information arising from assessment and is determined that children's time in the unit is productive. Good links have been established with several providers of pre-school and nursery education. This aids the smooth transition into school and is a significant factor in how quickly children settle. Staff make home visits to meet the children and their parents, and offer three introductory sessions (including a teddy bears' picnic) to

familiarise the children with the unit. Transition into Year 1 is equally well structured. Children are well prepared for the National Curriculum as the proportion of teacher-led activities are increased during the course of the Reception year.

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	109558
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	444470

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	510
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Janet Mackenzie
Headteacher	Richard Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2011
Telephone number	01582 490905
Fax number	01582 591343
Email address	schooloffice@themeads.primaryluton.co.uk

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