

St Meryl School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117166
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	290743
Inspection date	9 July 2007
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pamela Alldritt
Headteacher	Mr David Smith
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002
School address	The Mead Carpenders Park Watford Hertfordshire WD1 5BT
Telephone number	0208 4281695
Fax number	0208 4213919

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school. The majority of pupils are of white British background. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities (LDD) is also below average. Few pupils join or leave the school during the school year. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average; however they are all also fluent English speakers. The school holds a Sports Mark Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the school's self-evaluation that this is a good school and provides good value for money. It is well led and managed. The school enjoys the support of parents and rightly has a good reputation in the local community. One parent wrote, 'I would recommend St Meryl to everyone!'

Pupils' achievement is good. Children enter school with levels of attainment similar to those expected for their age. Overall they make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. Children make better progress in developing their communication, language, literacy, mathematical and social skills. However, the children do not make enough progress in their creative and physical development and many do not reach the expected standards. Not enough use is made of the outdoor areas to promote the children's physical development. By the end of the Foundation Stage, attainment overall is broadly in line with national expectations.

Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are above average. Standards in mathematics and in reading are consistently better than those in writing. The above average and sometimes very high standards in mathematics in Years 2 and 6 can be attributed to the importance the school has placed on teaching basic mathematical skills. However, the lack of emphasis placed on consolidating and extending pupils' basic writing skills through other subjects results in too few pupils attaining consistently high standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because their needs are clearly identified and they receive good support.

Pupils make good progress and enjoy school because they feel safe and well cared for. Pupils' personal development and the level of care, guidance and support are good. Health and safety issues are dealt with well and procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust. Relationships are good and teachers know their pupils well. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers make the lessons interesting and are using electronic whiteboards with increasing confidence to support learning. One older pupil said, 'I really enjoy using the interactive whiteboard, it is so much more fun and makes you want to find out more'. The opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and their creativity are not consistent throughout the school. There are too few opportunities in the Reception class for children to take responsibility for choosing the activity, the resources and the way in which they will complete a task.

The curriculum is enhanced effectively by a range of extra-curricular activities. Educational visits and visitors to the school help sustain the pupils' interest and motivate them to find out things for themselves. The good curriculum supports pupils' personal development and well-being including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of being healthy, adopting safe practices and contributing to the community.

Leadership and management are good. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and standards are rising. This is because the leadership team, including governors, have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. They provide clear direction for the development of the school and know that more rigour is needed in some aspects of its work. As a result the school has good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in English by ensuring that pupils apply, consolidate and develop their writing skills in all their written work.

- Provide a better balance to the curriculum in the Foundation Stage by placing a greater emphasis on promoting the children's physical and creative development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Children in the Foundation Stage are making slightly better progress than expected in their communication and mathematical skills. However, progress is satisfactory overall because their physical and creative development does not reach the expected standards.

Pupils make good progress in Years 1 to 6. Standards in Year 6 in 2005 and 2006 overall were exceptionally high. These pupils made very good progress in Years 3 to 6. The current Year 6 provisional test results show that too few pupils attained Level 4 and Level 5 in their writing tests and that the standards are likely to be broadly average in English and science but above average in mathematics. This suggests that the pupils have only made satisfactory progress from the end of Year 2. However, the work in their books is generally of a higher standard than the test results indicate. Analysis of the Year 4 and 5 non-statutory tests indicates that standards are above average. Pupils are well placed to achieve high standards in 2008 and 2009.

Standards in Year 2 are improving. They are usually above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This year, teachers have assessed standards to be above national expectations in reading and mathematics, and average in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils want to learn and fully involve themselves in their lessons. They enjoy school and attendance is good. They are developing a good understanding of healthy living and of being safe. Pupils support each other well by acting as 'playground friends' and looking after younger pupils. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils are keen to become members of the school council and contribute to the local and wider community by raising funds for various charities. However, they are capable of taking more responsibility for the organisation and running of the school council. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their schooling.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good relationship between pupils and adults ensures that the pupils respect their teachers and want to please them and as a result work hard. Teachers use questioning strategies effectively and generally match the work to the pupils' needs well. Good use is made of the very able teaching and learning support assistants. They work effectively with individuals and small groups, ensuring they make good progress. Teachers are becoming more confident in the use of the electronic whiteboards and are using them well to support lessons. In some lessons pupils are asked to evaluate their own or their friend's work against the learning objective. This is helping the pupils to effectively develop their skills in becoming self analytical and identifying

what they have to do to improve. In some classes there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning in this way.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs. It supports the development of pupils' understanding of living a healthy life style, being safe and contributing to the local community well. The work to enhance pupils' cultural development through art and geography is particularly effective. There are also strengths in the mathematics and history curriculum. However, pupils' basic writing skills are not consolidated sufficiently in other subjects. There are weaknesses in the Foundation Stage curriculum, particularly in the Reception class. Children do not have enough opportunities to choose for themselves and to develop their independence and creativity. Insufficient use is made of the outdoor area. The range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors contribute much to pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All members of staff place significant importance on ensuring the pupils are safe and well cared for. Statutory requirements are met and procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous. Effective induction arrangements ensure the children settle quickly into the Nursery and develop a positive attitude to school and learning. Assessment procedures are firmly established and used well to identify individuals who are not achieving as well as they should. Teachers assess pupils' work in English and mathematics carefully. In some classes, pupils are offered clear 'next step' guidance to ensure they achieve their targets. Pupils are more familiar with their targets for improvement in English than in mathematics. This is because teachers have identified the need to raise standards in writing and are consistently reinforcing the targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership of the school is successfully focussing on raising standards. This is being achieved through the systematic monitoring of teaching and learning and the setting of high expectations.

Staff work together well and are keen to contribute to the future development of the school. Subject leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities, although only recently appointed they are making a significant contribution to raising standards. Governors are good advocates for the work of the school and provide effective support. The school development plan is satisfactory but the links to standards and pupils' achievement and the measures by which the actions can be evaluated are not explicit enough.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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	2
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	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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 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.

Annex A

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

10 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Meryl Primary School, Watford, Hertfordshire. WD19 5BT

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed my visit and talking to you. I thought that you were very friendly and polite. Your behaviour in class and in the playground was good. I was very pleased to hear that you like coming to school and enjoy your lessons.

You go to a good school and learn a lot. All this has not happened by chance. It is because you have a good headteacher and dedicated staff who work really hard to make certain you get an effective education. You are well cared for, safe and are also getting a good understanding of healthy living. The contribution you make to the school community by looking after each other and by being so responsible is really good. Overall, by the time you get to Year 6, the standards you reach are above average. They tend to be better in mathematics than those in English. This is because too few of you are getting Levels 4 or 5 for your writing. Your teachers will be helping you by making sure you practice the skills you have learnt in your English lessons when you write in other subjects. You too must play your part by always remembering, for example, to use punctuation consistently and make better use of exciting and descriptive words. You will achieve those higher standards in English if you continue to make the progress you have made recently in your writing. Well done. Keep at it!

Although most of you make good progress, children in the Foundation Stage could do even better if they have more opportunities to work independently, to choose the activities and the equipment and to make better use of the outdoor area. I know your headteacher and teachers will be working on this.

Once again, thank you for my visit. I would have liked to have stayed longer.

Best wishes

David Wynford Jones (Lead inspector)