Inspection of Meridian Primary School

Harbour Avenue, Comberton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB23 7DD

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	**Requires improvement**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Requires improvement**
Personal development	**Requires improvement**
Leadership and management	**Requires improvement**
Early years provision	**Requires improvement**
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are keen to show they understand the new school values of 'resilience, kindness, respect, community and curiosity'. Many try their best to achieve these. For example, they show respect for, and value, other pupils' differences.

Pupils and staff have positive and courteous relationships. This means pupils feel safe and comfortable seeking help with concerns or worries.

Many pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics. However, expectations of what pupils can achieve in other subjects are lower. This is because teachers do not all share the same high expectations about what pupils can achieve. As a result, learning tasks do not always build on pupils' existing knowledge.

Pupils have noticed the recent improvements in the overall behaviour at the school. In the playground, pupils get along well with each other. This includes the youngest children in the school, who show that they are learning the school's routines well.

Many pupils are keen to work hard and want to try their best. However, there are times when some pupils do not listen and distract others from learning. Some teachers do not refocus pupils or ask them to stay on task.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has been through a period of instability. It now has new leadership in place. Leaders have acted swiftly to ensure that the pupils and staff understand the school's straightforward vision and values. This is important because it allows everyone to work towards the same aims. However, some crucial changes are still in the early stages of development. These include plans to improve pupils' behaviour and raise writing standards.

The school has some strengths, particularly in the teaching of mathematics and early reading. This is because the curriculum in these areas is structured well. Teachers know what to teach and when. The curriculum in these subjects also outlines the specific learning tasks pupils should complete. This enables staff to provide pupils with tasks that match pupils' knowledge and skills, ensuring they are able to know more as a result.

In other subjects, staff have not had effective training. They do not understand each subject's curriculum well enough. As a result, they do not design learning tasks that match the intended curriculum. Teachers do not use what pupils have learned before to align activities with pupils' understanding. As a result, tasks that pupils complete are sometimes too easy or too difficult. Additionally, language development is not personalised to pupils' specific needs, including in the early years. This is because the school has not identified the vocabulary that pupils should learn. Consequently, many pupils are not making as much progress as they could.

Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have individual

plans. These plans identify pupils' strengths and how staff can help them, for example by explaining the learning task in a different way. However, weaknesses in how learning tasks are designed mean that pupils with SEND do not consistently complete work that aligns with their identified needs.

Pupils enjoy reading. The school makes sure that pupils learn to read well. In Reception, children share stories and learn rhymes. This improves their listening skills and memory. These are important foundations for reading. More generally, all pupils learn a well-structured phonics programme. This helps them to get the practice they need to become confident and fluent readers.

Many pupils behave well. The youngest children in the school show positive attitudes to learning. However, in many lessons, some pupils are not as focused on their work as they should be and distract others from learning. Staff do not all share the same expectations for behaviour. This means that pupils do not work as hard as they could or for as long as they could. Additionally, some pupils do not focus and listen to the teacher when required, for instance, to understand the learning task. This leads to missed learning for many pupils.

The school ensures pupils experience trips and visitors to the school that enhance learning. Pupils have opportunities to take on leadership roles, but these require further development. Pupils are keen to have more chances to take on more responsibilities. Pupils learn about life in a diverse Britain, including learning about different religions. They also learn about some significant historical figures. These studies help them develop empathy.

Throughout the recent changes at the school, the governing body has worked closely with the local authority to ensure the school has leadership. This has been further strengthened this year by appointing an interim headteacher. Governors and leaders have developed well-considered plans to improve key areas of the school, such as staff development and raising expectations for behaviour. Staff feel supported. Leaders consider staff workload and well-being when making the changes needed to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff's expectations for pupils' behaviour in the classroom are not consistently high enough. This results in some pupils not listening well to instructions, becoming distracted and not completing work to a high standard, and pupils miss out on learning as a result. The school should ensure that high expectations for pupils' behaviour are

shared and consistently acted on.

- The school has not given enough importance to staff training and professional development in some subjects. As a result, teachers and middle leaders lack a detailed understanding of each subject and do not create learning tasks that ensure pupils develop effective knowledge and skills related to that subject. This also negatively impacts on pupils' subject-specific language development, including in the early years. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise required to teach all subjects effectively to better support pupils' learning across the full range of subjects.
- Consistent approaches to assessing pupils' knowledge have not been effective enough. This means that teachers do not know what prior knowledge pupils have retained and what they still need to learn. Learning tasks for pupils do not develop pupils' knowledge by building on prior knowledge effectively. This affects all pupils but particularly pupils with SEND. The school should ensure that assessments are used effectively to design learning tasks that support pupils to learn the planned curriculum effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	110626
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10345107
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mel Collins
Headteacher	Laura Summerfield (Interim Headteacher)
Website	www.meridianprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 July 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school currently has an interim headteacher.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the interim headteacher, assistant headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and early years lead. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and

looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils in class, in small groups and on the playground.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Ania Vaughan	Ofsted Inspector

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