

The Mead Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124959
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	293150
Inspection dates	26 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Jennifer Smith (HMI)

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School	Infant
School category	community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Linda Staff
Headteacher	Ms Sharon Walsh
Date of previous school inspection	05 February 2001
School address	Newbury Gardens Ewell Epsom KT19 0QG
Telephone number	020 8393 0966
Fax number	020 8786 8238

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Mead Infant School is a popular and larger than average size infant school with an attached hearing impaired unit for 10 children. A major building project, completed last year, provides a new purpose built resource base for hearing impaired children and an Early Years wing to the school. Most children come from relatively favourable social and economic backgrounds and the proportion eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of children with statements is a little above the national average by virtue of the hearing impaired unit. The proportion of children for whom English is an additional language is near the national average but has been growing recently. The school has achieved the Investors in People Award in 2002 and 2005 and the Basic Skills Quality Mark for Literacy and Numeracy in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Mead is an excellent school providing an outstanding education for its children, preparing them for the future well. Parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school and as one parent wrote, 'The Mead is a wonderful school! All staff that my family have met have been excellent and my child has loved each teacher she has had throughout her time at the Mead. In fact she will be sad to leave at the end of the year.' This sentiment was echoed by many other parents.

On starting school, either in the Nursery or Reception class, children's abilities are a little above that expected for their age and both boys and girls make significant progress and achieve exceptionally well as they move through the school. Children achieve well by the end of Reception and reach standards by the age of seven in reading, writing and mathematics, which are well above average due to the consistently high standards of teaching and the attention given to tracking children's individual progress. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with profound hearing impairment, are carefully encouraged to reach their potential. 'Inclusion is the cornerstone of the Mead School' as one governor said, this is very much in evidence in all aspects of school life. Teachers have high expectations for the children, and their skills and those of the teaching assistants ensure that children make excellent progress.

Children enjoy coming to school, behave well and are motivated and enthusiastic learners. Their personal development and well being is outstanding. They learn in a safe environment and the new hearing impaired resource base and early years wing, which is acoustically enhanced, adds significantly to the learning environment for young children.

The curriculum is kept under review and children have just begun an exciting new development, learning French. New initiatives have only been embarked upon where clear advantage has been seen in their development, enriching the life of children and staff in the school.

The 'Mead family' encourages all, children, parents and staff to work together as a community for the benefit of the children and parents are welcomed into the school to discuss their child's progress at any time. Parents comment regularly about the openness and friendly nature of the school. They feel involved and the thriving parent association and parent workshops are testament to the close working relationship between home and school.

The leadership of the school by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is exceptional and is well supported by other senior staff and governors, providing clear direction and a thirst for continued improvement. This creates an excellent learning environment where the professional development of all staff is given high priority, ensuring that the children always get the very best start in their education. Monitoring and evaluation is very thorough and leads to further improvement. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and has excellent capacity to develop further.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no major issues for the school to address. However, the school's own identified priorities for further development are entirely appropriate.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The standards reached at the end of Year 2 have been consistently high for many years, which is a significant feature of the school. A significant proportion of these children reach the highest levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress that children make is incremental as they move through the school from the Foundation Stage to Years 1 and 2. The children who do not attend the Nursery also make very good progress from the time that they join the school. The progress made by children who do not have English as their first language is excellent. Those with profound hearing loss also achieve very well both socially and academically due to their careful integration into main stream classes and the very high quality one-to-one teaching. Children, who have particular talents, such as in mathematics, have been provided with exceptional additional support to ensure that they are fully stretched by the teaching provided. These characteristics contribute markedly to the very inclusive nature of the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children flourish at the Mead; the attention given to individual children is excellent and they respond well to this. Children are very happy in school and parents overwhelmingly report that their sons and daughters enjoy coming to school. As one parent puts it, 'my son has grown in confidence since starting with the Mead, he loves school and over the holidays is always asking why is the school closed, is it time to go back yet?' This enjoyment of school is undoubtedly reflected in the very high attendance of children.

A newly formed school council has provided children with a good opportunity to experience first hand the purpose of voting and making choices, contributing to good early citizenship education. The class representatives spoke eloquently of what they had achieved so far. The inclusive nature of the school is also reflected in a comment from a parent who reports that her daughter, who does not have English as her first language, 'feels very at ease with other children and language is not a barrier anymore'. Children are polite, care for each other and behave very well both in lessons and around the school. They are keen and eager to learn and play well together at break and lunch time. Children both understand and live the positive values taught at the Mead; they are proud to 'belong to the Mead family'. For example, children take great pride in being specially chosen at lunchtime to sit at 'the good manners table.' Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Children are safe in school and rare instances of unfriendly behaviour and bullying are dealt with very promptly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning overall is outstanding enabling children to make very good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and very well developed teaching skills. They adapt their planning and teaching to meet the varying needs of children and make the learning exciting and stimulating. Children have good access to a range of information and communication technology. Key to the children's success is the high expectations of teachers, encouraging children to become independent thinkers and to have the self-confidence to attempt difficult answers, whilst inspiring them to achieve well. Teaching assistants are also particularly skilled at supporting groups of children and individuals, ensuring that they also make good progress. Class teachers and teaching assistants work together very closely, ensuring the best possible learning opportunities for children. Many classes are also further supported by very good additional voluntary adult help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is appropriately balanced in the Foundation Stage, where children have opportunities for well planned and focussed learning activities both in the classrooms and in an outdoor environment. The curriculum for Years 1 and 2 has been enriched with a number of initiatives, such as learning about saving money and budgeting. Recently, children and teachers have embarked on learning French. This carefully thought through project has inspired both children and their teachers to learn together. The children were eager to practice their newly acquired French language skills on the inspector during her visit! Enrichment afternoons are planned for this term which will add further to the range of curricular opportunities. Flexible setting arrangements are in place in Year 2 for writing and mathematics; these greatly enhance children's opportunities to achieve to their full potential. Children are encouraged to understand what being healthy means, through their choice of food at lunchtime but importantly through the curriculum in physical activity, circle time and science. The curriculum is outstanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Children are very well cared for and the guidance provided for children and parents is exemplary, including the careful preparation of children when they meet their new class teacher as they move from Reception to Year 1 and, later into Year 2. Workshop sessions provided for parents on various topics such as literacy and numeracy, are well attended and valued. Parents, staff and children all speak warmly of the family atmosphere at the Mead School. Relationships between children and adults are exceptional throughout the school. Parents feel that the openness and willingness of staff to make time to talk to them is a significant factor in the life of the school. Child protection procedures are secure.

The academic tracking of children's progress from the time they arrive at the school is very thorough and ensures that any underachievement of individual children is quickly addressed. Robust systems exist to support and encourage children with learning difficulties. Very effective individual education plans (IEPs) for those children with statements are in place. These are regularly reviewed and identify achievable short term targets, which enable these children to make good progress. Providing a buddy, where possible who speaks a child's first language, helps new children with little English to settle quickly and to feel at ease in their new surroundings both in lessons and at play and ensures they are well supported.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership together with her deputy and senior staff. She has ensured the exemplary stewardship of the school for a number of years, guaranteeing that high standards are maintained not only academically but in relation to children's personal development. This has enabled them to become confident, independent individuals with growing self esteem.

Professional development of the staff at senior and middle manager level is seen as key to the success of the school, creating a culture of constant improvement. Similarly, newly qualified teachers report that they receive very good professional support. As one member of staff reflected, 'this is a school where you can feel completely valued and supported to reach your potential, whilst you help children to reach theirs'.

Governors, very ably led by the chair of governors, have a clear understanding of both standards in the school and areas for development. They are actively and appropriately involved in visiting classrooms which provide a context in which to understand the presentations made to them, on a regular basis, by teachers. The headteacher, her staff and governors have been instrumental in shaping an exciting new Nursery, Reception classes and a hearing impaired resource base that adds greatly to the facilities at the Mead School.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

10 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of The Mead Infant School, Newbury Gardens, Ewell, Epsom, KT19 0QG

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and joining you in your lessons. I was very pleased to see how much you like school. I want to tell you what I found out about your school.

You are very lucky to go to such an outstanding school, where your teachers look after you exceptionally well and make sure that you are safe. You and the teachers have excellent ways of helping new children settle in extremely well. You are very enthusiastic in lessons and you are all learning very well because your teachers have high expectations of you. Your teachers are very good at explaining things and they prepare exciting and interesting activities for you. I was particularly pleased that you have started to learn French, and many of you greeted me with 'bonjour' when I arrived at your school! One member of the school council told me that he had already used his French when visiting France with his parents.

The school's new building for the youngest children and the resource base for children with hearing impairment is an excellent addition to the school. I am sure you will all look after it well. I was very impressed with how polite you all are and how well you behave in lessons and that you play well together.

Ms Walsh is an excellent headteacher. She and all the other adults work extremely hard to help you do as well as you can. I have decided that the school does not have any major things that it needs to improve, although I know that the teachers already have ideas for the future.

Thank you for helping me and I wish you good luck in the future, especially those of you about to move on to your junior school.

Jennifer Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

