

Kings Meadow School

Manning Road, Moulton Leys, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN3 7AR

Inspection dates

22–23 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads the school well. She sets high expectations and is steadily improving the quality of teaching further. She has a clear idea of the many strengths of the school and the areas that still need to be better.
- The promotion of pupils' welfare is excellent. Staff are highly effective at removing the considerable barriers to learning that pupils have on entering the school.
- As pupils' confidence builds over time, they soon become ready to learn and their progress accelerates.
- Pupils' overall progress is good. By the time they leave, pupils are well prepared for their next school.
- Staff communicate well and show highly caring attitudes to pupils. This helps build up pupils' trust and makes them want to work hard, succeed and cooperate.
- Pupils like coming to school greatly. Their attendance is above average and they show consistently positive aspects to learning. Low-level disruption is very rare because even when some pupils act out, their classmates continue to concentrate very hard on their work.
- The school environment is bright, welcoming and highly respected by pupils. They wear their uniform, and complete their work, with pride.
- There are minor inconsistencies in the teaching of mathematics. Though teachers' subject knowledge of mathematics is good overall, a minority of teachers need to develop greater confidence. They have not had the opportunity to see consistently outstanding teaching at first-hand.
- Leaders are only in the early stages of plans to check thoroughly with other schools the assessments they make of pupils' progress. As a result, teachers are not sure that their judgements are fully accurate.
- Until very recently, leaders have not provided governors with sufficiently detailed information about the spending of the pupil premium and the primary physical education (PE) and sports premium. As a result, governors have not been able to hold leaders to account for this as effectively as they might.
- The school development plan, though giving sensible actions to improve, does not make clear who will check whether these actions have occurred.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning further by ensuring that:
 - existing plans to check the assessment of pupils' progress with staff in other schools are fully implemented so that staff have an accurate understanding of pupils' outcomes over time
 - any teachers who feel less confident in their mathematics teaching improve their skills by seeing outstanding teaching for themselves.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - governors analyse the detailed information that leaders are now giving them in respect of the pupil premium and primary PE and sports premium, so they can be fully confident which actions are having the greatest impact on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, and why
 - the school development plan contains sufficient details of who will monitor whether the agreed actions have taken place.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment a little over two years ago, the headteacher has improved teaching and pupils' outcomes. Although the recruitment of teachers has proved difficult, she leads her staff with integrity, and has an accurate view of all the things the school does well. These are set out in a convincing self-evaluation document. She is also honest and perceptive about the aspects of the school that require further development, and she knows what needs to be done in order to improve them.
- The school's motto, 'believe and achieve' captures well Kings Meadow's aim of improving pupils' sense of self-worth. This aim ensures that pupils are helped to make good progress and achieve well from low starting points.
- The headteacher, strongly supported by her senior leadership team, promotes the equality of pupils' opportunity very well throughout the school. Their sincere belief in the inclusion of all pupils in all provision means that no pupils miss out on an experience. Where a pupil may have difficulty accessing a lesson or a visit, their support is adjusted with, for example, additional staff members so that he or she can take part too.
- Classrooms are bright and welcoming, where dedicated and patient staff work effectively to help pupils overcome barriers to learning.
- Subject leaders visit other classrooms to monitor the quality of teaching in the school, and look regularly at workbooks to check on pupils' progress. They report back efficiently to senior leaders and governors on what is working well, the impact of any improvement measures, and which other aspects need attention.
- The headteacher ensures that effective arrangements are in place for all staff, including teaching assistants, to undertake regular performance management. The headteacher is giving staff greater opportunities to reflect on their own roles and strengths, and to consider how they can develop their effectiveness over the longer and shorter terms. She is linking the appraisal of staff more tightly to continuing professional development, so that staff can improve their skills more easily.
- Leaders fulfil their statutory duties very well in respect of children who are looked after. Staff complete personal education plans for these pupils with a high level of detail. These plans include clear reporting about the progress made against targets, the success of the spending of additional funding and the proposed next steps. Staff take the views of both carers and the pupils themselves into account when evaluating the success of the plan.
- Leaders ensure that any physical restraint of pupils is fully documented, with the reasons for its use explained, and the effectiveness of such action. These incidents are discussed in briefings with all staff and are analysed regularly to discover any patterns. If these occur, leaders then ensure that staff adjust their approach for a pupil. This means that, over time, the frequency of these incidents have reduced.

- The curriculum strongly supports pupils to make good progress. Pupils find it both engaging and exciting, with topics starting from what pupils want to find out. Pupils' 'forest schools' lessons improve their skills in taking risks, teach them to work in teams and get them to challenge themselves to achieve more. Pupils who inspectors met during their visit also told them that they like the extra-curricular activities that staff provide, such as cooking, art, board games, sports and archery. These activities help to develop pupils' skills and talents in areas other than in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Outdoor learning gives pupils an important opportunity to reflect on the wonder of nature; for example, when they go on a scavenger hunt for pinecones in the school's wooded area. Pupils learn the importance of following the school rules and help to write ones for their own classrooms. They understand right from wrong. Those pupils who have been at the school for a longer period help to settle others who have recently arrived.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are taught fundamental British values well. Over time, pupils gain a clear understanding of the different religions and cultures of the world. For instance, inspectors saw an impressive display of decorated clay diva lamps that pupils had made with care and had decorated with creative flair after learning about Diwali. Pupils show a high level of respect for others who are different from themselves. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Parents who responded to the school's most recent questionnaire gave positive feedback about all aspects of the school. For example, one wrote, 'Thank-you for everything. We really like the consistency of staff in managing our child.' Another summed up their view of Kings Meadow by writing, 'Fantastic – an amazing school!' Parents who inspectors met during their visit also gave positive views.
- The majority of staff said that they have a clear understanding of the aims of the school, and agree that the school is well led and managed. A small minority say that communication is not always as effective as it could be. However, leaders are already discussing this with governors and are drawing up plans to address this aspect swiftly.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points. However, leaders agree that, until very recently, they have not provided governors with sufficiently detailed reports on this spending over time. As a result, governors have not been able to see for themselves which elements of additional provision have been the most and least effective, and why.
- The primary PE and sports provision is well spent to improve pupils' enjoyment and participation in sport. Again, however, governors have not had the opportunity to check thoroughly the impact of this funding because the information senior leaders have given them has been too brief to allow them to do this.
- The school development plan sets out clearly the correct priorities for improvement and has sensible actions to address them. However, although the plan states how the effectiveness of actions will be measured, it does not make clear who will be checking whether they have taken place. This risks the actions not occurring on time, or actions not having the result intended.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is strong, and continuing to improve. Governors hold senior leaders to account effectively for the school's provision and for pupils' outcomes. This is confirmed in governors' records, which show that they regularly ask searching questions of leaders at their meetings. A number of new governors have recently joined the governing body. This is adding to the level of challenge, as these members are bringing a wealth of new experience and perspectives to aid governors' overall skills.
- Governors check that the quality of teaching is continuing to improve by meeting with senior and subject leaders and checking the gains that pupils are making, both socially and academically. They also contribute well to writing the school development plan with senior leaders, based on the information they receive.
- Governors ensure that teachers receive challenging targets to improve their classroom performance. They are unafraid to take tough decisions if a teacher has not met their targets.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that all staff have been fully trained in safeguarding, including in areas of recent national concern, such as radicalisation. Staff were able to describe to inspectors the many different warning signs that might indicate that a pupil may be being harmed. Staff understand very well their responsibility to report any concerns they have to the leaders, however slight, and they are vigilant in their approach.
- Senior leaders and governors ensure that new staff are safely recruited, checking any gap in an applicant's employment history, and ensuring they receive suitable references.
- The single central register of recruitment checks meets requirements. There are effective risk assessments in place for external visits and for pupils who require them, due to their needs.
- Safeguarding records seen during the inspection show an exceptionally high level of detail, as well as brisk referral to social care where this is required. These records also make clear that the school maintains regular communication and effective work with a wide range of other external agencies, as well as good partnership with parents.
- The school's website contains useful links for parents to help their children stay safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and support staff are consistently effective in removing the barriers to learning that pupils have when they enter the school. Staff model good, positive relationships between themselves and are courteous and caring when talking to pupils. As a result, pupils begin to settle in well.

- Staff work consistently together, regardless of their role. This approach is very effective in helping to provide a stable, continuous environment that helps to make pupils feel secure.
- Staff also exchange information effectively regarding pupils' strengths and progress – planning collaboratively and personalising the learning that they give to each pupil, based on their individual needs.
- Once pupils are settled, they begin to follow instructions and are keen to work. Effective questioning from teachers means that pupils are given frequent opportunities to think for themselves, be challenged and to explain their reasoning and understanding.
- Staff ensure that good-quality physical resources are readily available for pupils to use in lessons. Pupils are able, for example, to see and handle mathematics counters and three-dimensional shapes for themselves. This helps them to understand place value and the physical properties that different shapes have.
- Teachers meet with parents to provide them with effective information about how their child is progressing. Teachers send home to parents targets from their child's individual education plan so that they will have a good understanding of what their child needs to achieve next. In addition, they make frequent phone calls to parents to update them on any significant development for their child, and invite all parents in each term to see and discuss their child's work for themselves.
- Homework is set on an individualised basis, through negotiation with parents. Where this will benefit a pupil's progress, it is used well. If a pupil is not ready to complete it, and setting it will create anxiety for a pupil, staff wisely hold back from giving it out until a pupil is ready to benefit from it.
- The teaching of mathematics is not consistently good, compared with other subjects. Some staff do not have sufficient confidence, and they have not had the opportunity to see for themselves outstanding teaching in this subject.
- Teachers make detailed checks on pupils' social and academic progress, and discuss these as a school team. However, they have not assured themselves that these assessments are accurate by having them checked thoroughly with, for example, other similar schools.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils arrive at the school with considerable social, emotional and behavioural needs, with many also having mental health issues. Very positive approaches from staff mean that pupils' trust begins to grow over time. Pupils' sense of self-worth is nurtured carefully. As pupils stay in the school longer they learn to, for example, take turns, to accept and then welcome praise, to persevere and to both win and lose games appropriately.

- Highly effective, interactive assemblies teach pupils important skills, such as cooperation. Inspectors observed how engaged pupils were, and how they were keen to give their ideas, explaining to staff how it meant 'working as a team', 'being positive with each other' and 'helping each other to do things'.
- Breaktimes are productive social occasions where staff show pupils how to play together. Pupils greatly enjoy the outdoor area and using the climbing equipment energetically.
- Displays on the school corridors and in classrooms showcase the work by pupils, as well as depicting photographs of their learning, and promoting the school's values. They also celebrate pupils' achievements, both academically and socially. Individual targets for pupils, which are displayed prominently in classrooms, give pupils clear goals to aim for.
- Staff work highly effectively to promote a safe atmosphere. Even when a pupil is in crisis and needs intense support, staff ensure that they and other pupils stay calm and positive, so the pupil has a visible 'norm' to work back to.
- Pupils feel that their voice matters. Considerable proportions of them apply in writing to be members of the 'school crew'. Recently, they voted to purchase new playground equipment and to coordinate social events such as the school's Macmillan charity coffee mornings with the fundraising parent-teacher association.
- Pupils know well the importance of keeping healthy, and can describe in detail the foods they should avoid eating excessively, as well as the importance of consuming lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. They also understand the need to stay fit, and very much enjoy taking part in physical education and games.
- Pupils told inspectors how they felt very safe in school. They explained how name-calling and bullying are very rare, and how staff deal with them promptly if they ever happen. Pupils said that they can and do approach staff if they feel worried about anything, and that staff always take the time to listen to them.
- Pupils develop a very good understanding of a range of risks to their safety, such as rivers, strangers, traffic and electricity. They also understand well how to keep safe when using technology. For example, pupils who spoke to inspectors were clear why they should not give their personal details when online. They were also clear that they must quickly tell an adult they trust if they see an image, or receive a message, which worries them.
- Staff ensure that they support pupils very well during all points of transition within the school, and when pupils move on to their next school. Staff have very good relationships with the staff at the secondary special school that almost all pupils transfer to. This means that teachers there receive a good understanding of pupils' needs before they arrive, and can help pupils to settle in quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive. Staff help them greatly to understand the importance of learning and of working hard. As a result, pupils are aspirational. Those pupils who inspectors met told them how they hoped to attend

universities and colleges when they grew up.

- Pupils show a clear sense of pride in their work. Inspectors saw, for example, how pupils had collaborated to design, build and paint a model house and garden using cardboard and adhesive tape. Pupils also complete their written and mathematics work neatly.
- Pupils are very polite to visitors, holding doors open and communicating appropriately with them in an enquiring and friendly manner. Pupils also wear their uniform with pride. They respect the school buildings and grounds very well and keep them tidy and free of litter.
- Because pupils often enter the school with very limited self-awareness, staff teach them to begin to recognise when they are becoming anxious, frustrated or worried. This is so that they can seek help before a crisis occurs. As a result, there is a substantial improvement in pupils' behaviour over time. Many of those pupils who have been at the school for a considerable period are largely able to manage their own behaviour.
- Disruption to learning is rare. This is because though individual pupils do have emotional outbursts, staff manage these very well. As a result, when any pupil finds it difficult to control their behaviour, and they disengage themselves from their learning, it does not disrupt the lesson. Other pupils maintain their concentration and continue to work hard, regardless.
- Pupils' attendance is consistently above the national average for other similar schools. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also above this figure, and has improved further over the last academic year. This is because pupils greatly enjoy coming to school to learn. Leaders have very good systems in place to monitor any absence from pupils, with the school's family support workers communicating quickly and effectively to support any family whose child is not attending as regularly as they should. As a result, the attendance of these pupils improves over time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Although the school admits pupils from the age of five, most pupils enter the school considerably later than this, and at different times in the academic year. Each year group is small and the complexity of pupils' needs varies considerably. However, all pupils in the school have education, health and care (EHC) plans for their special educational needs and/or disabilities, with many of these needs being highly complex and multiple. Almost all pupils enter the school with very low self-esteem, negative attitudes to education and very low levels of resilience. A large number of pupils have complex mental health needs.
- Nationally published information shows that pupils in all year groups enter the school with significantly lower attainment than other pupils nationally. However, this data does not reflect the overall progress that pupils make during their time at the school.
- In some years and groups, the relatively small number of pupils means that data needs to be interpreted with care. However, analysis of the larger groups indicates that pupils make good overall progress.
- Staff understand that in order for each pupil to succeed academically, they must first

build his or her readiness to learn. This often takes many terms. All activities within the school are therefore underpinned by carefully planned structures and routines that help prepare pupils to become confident learners. As a result, pupils' non-academic progress is particularly strong. This is evident through compelling evidence within the records of development that staff collect.

- Once pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs are improved, their progress in their academic ability begins to accelerate. This was confirmed in a large range of pupils' books that inspectors saw during their visit, along with the learning that inspectors saw for themselves.
- The overall progress of disadvantaged pupils is good, from their particularly low starting points. Leaders spend the pupil premium well, for instance to improve the communication skills of disadvantaged pupils, as well as to improve their skills in mathematics. As a result, the progress of these pupils accelerates. The proportion of most able disadvantaged pupils is too small for their outcomes to be reported without the risk of identifying them.
- Pupils make good gains in subjects other than English and mathematics. This is also true for the most able pupils in the school. For example, these pupils gain a good understanding of continents and hemispheres in geography, using accurate terminology to describe locations and climates. In design technology, they learn to, for instance, plan and build a model lighthouse with precise measurements, listing all the resources they will need.
- Pupils make good progress in physical education. Inspectors saw a lesson where pupils were highly engaged. Pupils were following adults' instructions to improve their skills to dribble a basketball, and were demonstrating a sense of resilience, as well as improving their ability to listen closely and watch carefully. In addition, pupils were also encouraging each other to succeed, and their attitudes to learning were excellent.
- Pupils make good progress with their reading, learning the strategies to pronounce unfamiliar words. For example, pupils were able to say aloud the word 'diplodocus' when reading about dinosaurs. The school's recent emphasis on reading has meant that pupils take great pleasure from books.
- At the end of Year 6, almost all pupils transfer to the same local authority secondary special school. However, they leave Kings Meadow well prepared for this because they have developed much greater resilience and have learned to understand their own potential. They have improved their academic skills and are ready to access the curriculum they will be taught at their new school.

School details

Unique reference number	122167
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10001247

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Celia Chapman
Headteacher	Helen McCormack
Telephone number	01604 673730
Website	www.kingsmeadow.northants.sch.uk
Email address	head@kingsmeadow.northants-ecl.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 March 2012

Information about this school

- This is a maintained special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- There are currently 32 pupils on roll, aged six to 11 years old. These pupils are divided into four mixed-age classes. There are currently no pupils in the early years.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. Most pupils are White British.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning at least twice in all classes of the school. Some of the observations took place accompanied by the headteacher or other senior leaders. In total, nine lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed. The inspectors also scrutinised many examples of pupils' work.
- The inspection team held meetings with the senior leaders, subject leaders, governors and pupils. There were insufficient responses to Parent View to analyse the results, so inspectors met with parents at the start and end of the school day and scrutinised all responses to the school's most recent questionnaire with parents. They also looked at the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's development plan and self-evaluation, policies and records related to safeguarding. In addition, inspectors scrutinised records of pupils' behaviour, the school's information about pupils' outcomes and attendance, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Roary Pownall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Bell

Ofsted Inspector

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