

River Mead School

Lowbourn, Melksham, SN12 7ED

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Pupils have not made enough progress and have fallen further behind since the school first became a sponsored academy in May 2013.
- The progress made by the many pupils supported by additional funding is too slow.
- The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6, including those for whom additional funding is provided, is well below average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching has been inadequate since the academy opened. It has not enabled pupils to make rapid progress from generally low starting points.
- Teachers' marking and feedback do not consistently help pupils to improve their work.
- Teachers do not have a secure grasp of what pupils already know and understand. As a result, they do not plan what pupils need to learn next carefully enough.
- The early years provision requires improvement. Since the school first opened as an academy in May 2013, it has not provided children with the support and facilities they need in order to develop key skills quickly.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons have not been good over time and senior staff have not tackled this strongly until recently.
- Subject leaders do not have a thorough understanding of how well pupils make progress. Therefore, they are not effective in raising standards and improving the quality of teaching in their subjects.

The school has the following strengths:

- Since joining the school, new senior leaders have made significant improvements to the quality of teaching. Pupils are now beginning to catch up. Rapid improvement in pupils' early reading skills has been secured.
- The provision for children in the early years and in the resource base has improved significantly. High-quality support and advice helps children make better progress.
- The new senior leaders' high expectations of pupils' attitudes have significantly improved pupils' behaviour.
- The new academy governors know the school well. They provide increasing challenge and support for the school leaders which are leading to better progress for pupils.
- Arrangements to ensure pupils are kept safe are good. As a result, pupils feel secure.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons, three of which were joint observations with the executive headteacher or head of school. They also observed one assembly.
- Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils from Years 2 and 6 reading.
- The team held discussions with pupils and looked at a range of work. The school’s information on pupils’ attainment and progress was examined.
- Meetings were held with the governing body, senior leaders, subject leaders and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors considered 44 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and 31 responses to the questionnaire returned by staff. They also spoke to parents and carers and took their views into account.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including plans for improvement and safeguarding arrangements. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour and attendance. Reports to governors were also studied.

Inspection team

Janet Sharp, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector
Paul Edwards	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- This school is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school.
- It became an academy in May 2013, sponsored by The United Learning Trust. It transferred from this Trust to The Mead Academy Trust in September 2014, and is now led by the executive headteacher of the Trust and a newly appointed head of school. When its predecessor school, Kings Park Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate and to require special measures.
- The school has been supported by The Mead Community Primary School since becoming part of The Mead Academy Trust.
- Since the school transferred to The Mead Academy Trust, there have been many changes of staff, particularly senior staff and subject leaders. The Chair of the Governing Body and Vice Chair are the only two governors who have remained on the governing body since the previous Academy Trust, and four new governors have been appointed.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with complex learning needs. There are 19 pupils in this provision, in two classes in either Reception/Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs on the school roll is about 20%, which is above the proportion found in most schools.
- The percentage of pupils supported through the pupil premium is 43%; this is much higher than the proportion found nationally. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In the early years provision, children in Reception attend full time. Most children in the Nursery attend part time; a small number attend full time.
- Privately managed pre-school provision and a children's centre share the same site as the school. These facilities are subject to separate inspections.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to enable pupils to make faster progress and raise their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers make accurate checks on pupils' progress and use these to identify what they need to learn next to improve
 - learning is appropriately matched to pupils' ability in order to increase the progress they make
 - the recent improvements to attitudes to learning are reinforced to make sure that all pupils take a keen interest in their work
 - pupils have opportunities to respond to consistently high-quality marking and feedback that are specific, accurate and clear, and help them to improve.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that subject leaders:
 - communicate high expectations and ambition for their areas of leadership
 - implement improvements to enrich provision and speed up pupils' learning
 - have a thorough understanding of pupils' progress in their subjects and use this information to secure

concerted and effective improvement

- check carefully the effectiveness of new initiatives within agreed timescales to quicken the pace of improvement.
- Embed and sustain senior leaders’ checks on the progress and achievement of different groups of pupils, particularly those supported through additional funding, and ensure that resources are used effectively to help pupils to make good progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not been able to improve pupils' achievement and secure effective teaching over the period since the school first opened as an academy in May 2013.
- However, in the short time since the new academy sponsor took over, the new senior leaders have taken extremely robust action to improve every aspect of the school. They have had a very positive impact on improving behaviour and the quality of teaching. Pupils' achievement is improving. This demonstrates that the school has the capacity to improve further.
- There has been a relentless focus on the progress of individual pupils and particularly pupils supported through the pupil premium. A wide range of initiatives has been introduced across the school to make a positive difference for these pupils. Teaching assistants have been trained in specific programmes to support pupils, for example to increase the progress of boys and those pupils for whom the school receives additional funding.
- Since their appointment in September 2014, the executive headteacher and the head of school have set a clear direction for the school and are committed to leaving 'no stone unturned' in their quest towards raising outcomes for pupils. They successfully promote equality of opportunity, tackle discrimination and ensure good professional relationships for everyone in the school community.
- There is now a rigorous focus on raising the quality of teaching in a wide range of ways, such as well-focused observations, using high-quality resources and making the best use of additional support in the classroom. This is improving pupils' progress.
- The head of school was seen by inspectors to give very accurate, constructive and developmental feedback to a teacher to support further improvement. This is typical and reflects the shift in culture that is taking place. Senior leaders are checking individual pupils' progress carefully and have put in place interventions to improve their learning. Challenging targets are set for pupils and teachers are being held to account for helping pupils reach them.
- The organisation of 'inclusion' (support for those pupils that need most help) has recently been changed, with a new leadership team in place. This is ensuring a more effective use of funding for children looked after by the local authority, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils in the resource base are now given opportunities to mix and engage with other pupils to ensure they are part of the school community.
- The provision for disadvantaged pupils is improving. Since becoming an academy, leadership of the use of additional funding has been poor. However, the new senior leaders have carefully considered the pupils' needs and, as a result, have introduced new initiatives, although these have not yet been fully evaluated, as many are new.
- The curriculum has a clear structure and recently introduced topic planning is now gaining pupils' interests much more than previously. The topics have 'super starters, marvellous middles and fantastic finishes' and elements of these give parents and carers the opportunity to be actively involved in their children's learning.
- The curriculum has appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Improvements, such as developing a 'Charter for Living and Learning', have a positive effect on pupils' personal development. This has not always been the case. However, leaders are now providing a wider range of activities to enrich pupils' learning experiences. For example, a group of pupils visited the Bristol Suspension Bridge recently, and the school choir sang at the O2 with the National Young Voices Choir, promoting their cultural development.
- The school provides good opportunities for physical and sporting activities. It is using the primary school sports funding well and has been effective in increasing pupils' participation in these activities.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They described their support of British values in the way they respect different lifestyles and the efforts they and school staff make to accommodate these differences. The school promotes tolerance and respect very well through the curriculum and school assemblies.
- Many of the subject leaders are new to the school and were appointed since the academy opened in May 2013. They have had too little accountability for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. However, the new senior leaders have begun to raise expectations and lead training, although some subject leaders still do not communicate high enough expectations in their subjects. They have not implemented

improvements to enrich provision to improve learning further. Currently, subject leaders' do not have a good enough understanding of pupils' progress in their subjects and are therefore not able to bring about significant improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

- All statutory safeguarding requirements are met. Administrative arrangements to ensure children's safety are comprehensive. Child protection training and health and safety arrangements are thorough and a number of staff have been trained for first aid. Members of the Trust Board have undertaken 'Safer Recruitment Training', as all appointments are made by them. One school governor has also completed this training.
- Prior to the school joining The Mead Academy Trust, there was little support or accountability for the school. However, more recently the new Academy Trust has injected substantial expertise to support subject leadership, notably through the Mead Community Primary School. This is helping to underpin many of the developments which are taking place.
- The previous academy was not supported well by the local authority. Since September, the local authority has provided a good level of targeted support for the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the school first became an academy, the governors had not been sufficiently effective in securing the best outcomes for the pupils in the school. However, a recent review of governance led to a new governing body being formed in September under the new sponsorship arrangements. These governors know the school well. This review included the use of the pupil premium and governors have a clear view of the impact of this additional funding. The governors are mostly relatively new to this role, but are led by an experienced Chair of the Governing Body and Vice Chair. They have an accurate view of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and of what needs to be done to improve. They recognise the need for the school to improve rapidly and the importance of tight timescales. They are aware of actions taken and funding issues and take their responsibilities seriously. They are ambitious for the school and work hard to enable the school to succeed.
 - Each governor has several responsibilities for groups of pupils, subjects and other aspects, and they make frequent visits to the school to support developments. They have not yet evaluated the impact of all developments, as some are at a relatively early stage.
 - Governors take their safeguarding duties seriously and have completed the relevant training. They have been involved in the anti-bullying initiative and promote tolerance, respect and equality for everyone.
 - Procedures for undertaking performance management are the responsibility of the Trust, and are in place. The Trust ensures pay awards are based on effective teaching and good achievement, and the school's governors have supported senior leaders in tackling underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Parents and carers consider the pupils are well behaved. Pupils' behaviour has improved considerably since September, but not all pupils are yet taking a keen interest in their work.
- In the playground, at playtimes and break times pupils behave well.
- Pupils generally cooperate well. They are polite and courteous towards each other and adults.
- The school staff have worked hard recently to introduce and implement new and raised expectations of behaviour and these expectations are displayed around the school. As a result, attitudes to learning are much improved.
- The pupils report that behaviour has improved significantly since September, both in the playground and in classrooms. School leaders take quick and effective action to address any issues of concern to pupils, such as name-calling.
- Occasionally, when pupils are not closely supervised in lessons, their attention loses focus and their learning slows.
- Pupils in the specially resourced provision behave very well despite their complex needs. This is because they respond very well to the high levels of care they receive.
- Pupils are becoming more involved in their learning as teaching improves and the topics covered are made more interesting.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and when on visits. Parents and carers agree and are confident their children are well looked after.
- A recent anti-bullying week helped to raise awareness of this issue and encouraged pupils to use strategies to prevent them being vulnerable. They can explain how they treat everyone in the school and community equally.
- Pupils understand the different types of bullying, including those related to social media websites and know the dangers of using the internet and how to keep safe. The pupils spoken to said bullying is rare. They have confidence that staff will manage bullying well when reported.
- Attendance has improved and is broadly average. This improved attendance demonstrates pupils' increasing enthusiasm for learning. Senior leaders follow up any absence immediately and thoroughly.
- The school takes very good care of its pupils. Pupils with complex needs in the resource base are provided with a high level of care, ensuring they learn in a very safe environment.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Since the school first became an academy, the quality of teaching has not been good enough to ensure that all pupils make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers and other adults often focus exclusively on one group's learning to the detriment of other groups. Often, pupils not working directly with an adult become 'off task' quickly and then fail to make sufficient progress.
- Since September, the quality of teaching has improved and there are pockets of strong practice.
- In mathematics in Key Stage 2, for instance, there is improved planning to ensure pupils are supported and their learning is extended. Some older pupils were seen developing competence in understanding the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. Effective support was provided for those who needed it and ensured there was sufficient challenge for the full range of pupils' abilities.
- Recent improvements in the teaching of phonics are having an impact. In the early years and Years 1 and 2, staff have been trained to teach outdoor phonics in order to better support pupils' learning. It has been particularly effective in improving the skills of boys who have previously underachieved. Teachers are now keeping much better records of pupils' progress and identify what they need to learn next.
- There is some evidence that the most able pupils are being provided with difficult work that makes them think hard. For example, in some written work, the teacher's marking was clearly focused on developing and broadening the able pupils' writing skills. However, challenge for the most able pupils is not consistently developed across the school. Too often all pupils are expected to complete the same work, to the same standard and in the same time.
- Where pupils are in mixed-age group classes, there is some evidence in their books that they are not getting the same opportunity to develop skills and make progress at the same rate as pupils in other classes.
- There is clear evidence of improved teaching in the resource base. Teachers and support staff match work well to pupils' complex needs. As a result, they make small, but significant, gains in their understanding.
- The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work and the feedback given to pupils are inconsistent. There are signs that marking is improving in response to recent training. However, not all teachers are setting 'next steps' to help pupils to improve or encouraging pupils to respond to their comments. This is inhibiting pupils' progress as they are not always given time to correct their work or learn from their mistakes.

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Since becoming an academy, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has been poor. Their attainment at the end of Year 6 has been low and they have not made enough progress. The government's floor standards have not been met. In 2014, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was significantly below average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2014 was broadly average in reading and better than that in mathematics. Their standards in writing were below average. The school's own checks on pupils' progress since September show greater progress being made this year than previously in both writing and

phonics for pupils in Years 1 and 2.

- Pupils throughout the school have made much better progress since September. Changes in staff and recent training are improving the attainment and progress of all pupils. Everything the school now does has a strong focus on improving pupils' achievement.
- The senior staff track individual pupils' progress carefully and identify actions to increase the progress that all pupils make. They set challenging targets for the pupils. Senior leaders hold frequent discussions with teachers to focus on how the best outcomes for pupils can be achieved. Good training has helped teachers take more responsibility for the progress of their pupils.
- Pupils eligible for additional funding have, until recently, made very poor progress, resulting in low attainment. In 2014, Year 6 pupils supported by additional funding were more than two years behind other pupils nationally in mathematics and reading and nearly two years behind in writing. When compared with other pupils in the school, they were six months behind in mathematics and writing and 20 months behind in reading. Their progress was also poor in relation to that of other pupils nationally. Improved teaching and more focused spending of the additional funding mean that the progress of these pupils has improved this year.
- The most able pupils achieve in line with others nationally in Key Stage 1, and over the last two years this has steadily improved. Too few pupils in Key Stage 2 attain the higher levels. Teachers are now beginning to identify ways to extend the most able pupils, but these are not yet consistently used across the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in mainstream classes make insufficient progress. They struggle in their reading due to insecure phonics knowledge and lack of fluency. This is particularly noticeable as these pupils move up the school when the gap between them and the rest of the pupils increases. School information shows that the progress of the lowest attaining pupils in mathematics and reading has been very poor. Recently, a new inclusion team has been formed and together they are beginning to address the issues effectively. In common with other pupils, the progress of these pupils is improving.
- The pupils in the resource base make steady progress as they have very specific programmes and goals to achieve. They are supported well.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children start school with skills and abilities at levels below those typical for their age, and a few begin in the Nursery or Reception with very low communication and language skills.
- The senior staff are focused on giving the children the best possible start to school and this is showing early signs of making a positive difference for these children.
- Children have not made good progress over time, or reached a good level of development. However, last year better progress was made and most children were ready to enter Year 1 with appropriate skills.
- Very recently the whole early years provision, including the early years and Key Stage 1 resource base, has been relocated and reorganised to ensure all children have access to high-quality indoor and outdoor learning resources. This supports all of the Nursery, Reception and Year 1 and 2 children in the resource base very effectively.
- There are now high standards of care and safety and well-organised routines which help children feel secure and they enjoy happy relationships with the staff. The children are now making good progress, particularly in their communication and personal skills. Children in the early years behave well as they are busy with all the activities and equipment available.
- Teaching requires improvement to ensure that all children make good progress from their different starting points. The early years provision is now led and managed effectively. Children are supported to learn well and systems to check their progress are established. In a short time, the much improved leadership and management of early years have had a significant impact.

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	139260
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	449839
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy, sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Holland
Headteacher	Lyssy Bolton (Executive Headteacher) Nicki Henderson (Head of School)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01225 703428
Fax number	01225 700340
Email address	office@rivermead.wilts.sch.uk

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