

# Merton Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	116001
<b>Local authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379185
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Michael Pye

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	128
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	George Hood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Palmer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22–23 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	Romsey Close Popley Way Basingstoke RG24 9HB
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Pye

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed eight lessons including those involving linking sounds and letters. Of these, three were joint observations with the headteacher. A total of six teachers were seen. The inspector looked at pupils' work and also heard pupils read. He spoke to parents and carers and held meetings with members of the governing body, pupils and staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. The school's development plan, lesson and curriculum plans, governing body documentation and school policies and procedures, particularly those relating to the health and safety and safeguarding of pupils, were scrutinised. He also looked at 31 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those returned by staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

Pupils in this smaller-than-average-sized junior school come from a predominantly White British background. The largest minority ethnic group consists of pupils from Any Other White background. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is currently well above average. The main groups consist of pupils with moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Currently, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school exceeds current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has been nationally recognised through gaining the enhanced Healthy Schools award.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school. Pupils achieve well. It is not an outstanding school because teaching and pupils’ achievement are good rather than outstanding. Although overall leadership and management are good, some aspects of middle management are in need of improvement.
- Pupils make good progress and attain average standards in writing, reading and mathematics. A whole school focus has brought gains in the quality of writing. Pupils have opportunities for writing at length but the use of an extended writing session for assessment and detailed feedback to pupils is not maximised.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving. A strength is the high quality of relationships which ensures that pupils, including the high number of pupils who find concentrating in school more difficult, engage in lessons. There exist some inconsistencies in teachers’ use of data to plan lessons and in how pupils’ understanding is checked during lessons.
- Pupils’ behaviour is good. Pastoral support for pupils is outstanding and undoubtedly contributes to pupils feeling safe and respected.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has overseen a good, effective drive for improvement. Leadership and management responsibilities have been well distributed. All are involved in monitoring and evaluation. Inconsistencies exist between subject leaders in the degree to which they use criteria against which progress can be measured in their development plans. Also, their action plans do not clearly show how their area of responsibility supports the whole school development plan. Not all curriculum plans contain sufficiently detailed guidance about how skills and knowledge are progressed in that subject, or where the basic skills, especially mathematics, are supported. Governors act as critical friends to the school because through regular visits they monitor the work of the school well. They receive reports from all subject leaders. However, their knowledge of levels of work across the school in subjects other than literacy and numeracy is limited by the fact that attainment and progress are not reported on in these reports.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics building on pupils' already good achievement, ensuring that all teachers:
  - use regular consolidation periods during lessons to identify any gaps in learning and use that information to change the direction of the lesson to support pupils' learning
  - use assessment data to plan work that challenges pupils of different abilities.
- Maximise the impact of leaders and managers, making the most of current good practice, by:
  - ensuring that all curriculum plans show in detail where and when a particular subject's skills and knowledge are progressed across the school, and how the subject supports the basic skills, especially in mathematics
  - making sure subject leaders use criteria in their development plans against which success can be measured, and how the subject supports the priorities of the whole school improvement plan
  - ensuring that when reporting to governors all subject leaders provide information about pupils' progress and their levels of work.
- Improve pupils' achievement through providing regular opportunities for all pupils to complete extended pieces of writing, leading to in-depth assessment of strengths and weaknesses which staff can use to provide detailed feedback to pupils about how to improve their work.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Attainment on entry varies from year to year, from broadly to well below average depending on the cohort. Pupils achieve well because they have positive attitudes to school. Their determination was well illustrated in one lower set mathematics lesson where pupils were working to solve problems using decimal points. After clear explanations by the teacher, one pupil said excitedly, 'I think we've got it!'

Younger pupils' work shows middle attainers confidently using multiplication skills to solve basic word problems. By the end of Year 6 pupils' work reflects good progress and pupils use, for example, different methodologies to convert percentages to fractions and decimals. Pupils respond particularly well when mathematics is applied to real situations. For example, older pupils used a summer fayre scenario to calculate, using their knowledge of money, the exact total takings for three different stalls. Not all younger pupils find writing easy and some experience difficulty in spelling. The majority write clearly and are able to write simple sentences. Older pupils increasingly use adjectives, similes and metaphors to write complex sentences. One pupil wrote of a wizard type character as 'wearing a blue jacket with stars on it and a black mask as dark as the darkest sky'. Reading levels are average by the end

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of Year 6. Year 4 readers choose books independently, like reading to adults and talk about their favourite authors. They use their linking sounds to letters knowledge (phonics) to identify accurately individual sounds in words. The school has recently introduced regular phonics sessions so not all pupils naturally use this approach; one girl initially said she could not spell 'potato', but after being encouraged to sound out the word she successfully completed the sentence.

Overall, attainment when pupils leave the school is average, which represents good achievement. In 2011 the various minority pupil groups, including those pupils with English as an additional language, attained above average levels. Detailed pupil tracking results in a high proportion of those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieving well, as do pupils with disabilities or special educational needs.

Parents praise the positive impact of recent changes, writing comments such as 'standards have greatly improved' and 'very impressed with the way the school is going'. Pupils support these positive comments.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teaching is typically good. In an outstanding mathematics lesson the use of individual whiteboards allowed pupils to show their work on fractions. This was exceptionally well used by the teacher to illustrate and explain misconceptions. A Year 3 English lesson saw pupils very appropriately challenged. The teacher identified the different learning expected of three ability groups, involving references to the use of metaphors and similes by some pupils, whilst lower attainers were expected to show their knowledge of the three-part story – beginning, middle and end. In all lessons the high quality of relationships ensures that pupils are highly motivated and engaged in their learning. Lessons have good pace and interactive whiteboards are well used. Pupils' social development is well enhanced by the consistent use of talk partners and self-evaluation opportunities. Some inconsistencies exist between teachers regarding their use of assessment data to set challenging work for pupils of different abilities and in their use of on-going assessment. All parents and carers and the great majority of pupils who completed the Ofsted questionnaire agree that teaching is good. Secure subject knowledge leads to some effective questioning by teachers which very appropriately encourages pupils to reflect on their learning. Pupils enjoy the creative curriculum opportunities for learning and spoke excitedly about the possible break in to the school and the painting of a 'Banksie' style graffiti image as part of the Catwalk Creations topic. There are good opportunities for the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils during assemblies and circle time. Pupils obviously enjoy singing.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The majority of pupils say that they feel safe. Parents and carers who expressed an opinion agree and believe that behaviour is good. Attendance is above average and improving. The school analysis of behaviour illustrates the very positive impact of its

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work; lunchtime incidents of poorer behaviour fell by 90% in one year. Behaviour over time is good. Occasional off-task behaviour is seen in lessons, usually when adults move to another group. Pupils are adamant that any incidents are acted upon effectively and promptly by the school, including the few incidents of bullying. They show their understanding of bullying when commenting that there are 'arguments rather than bullying'. With regard to cyber-bullying and internet safety an example recounted by one pupil was, 'If you are on a chat site you don't know if the other person is an adult.' A girl said, 'Whilst one person sees it as funny, the other may see it as homophobic.' Personal and social development is actively encouraged when pupils act as school councillors and buddies.

One parent wrote and echoed the view of many about the quality of pastoral care, 'My child is going through a very tough time, not only have the staff been very sensitive to her and my own needs, they have also been able to work with my child so that schooling has not been affected at all.' This reflects the genuine nurturing approach to the pupils' pastoral care and helps ensure pupils are able to concentrate on their learning.

## **Leadership and management**

Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with a trend of improving attainment as a consequence of effective monitoring and better quality teaching. More accountability exists, a consequence of the wider distribution of leadership responsibilities and regular, highly focused pupil progress meetings. The school acknowledges the need for a regular assessment opportunity of extended writing where detailed feedback can be given to pupils. The headteacher's ambition, based on constant improvement, is evident and shared by all adults. This shared vision, along with the improvements to achievement and teaching, shows a good capacity to sustain improvement.

An example of improvement is the successful introduction of 'directed play' at the start of the school day. This resulted from a consideration by the school of how to better settle pupils into the school day, particularly those facing specific social and emotional difficulties. Monitoring is embedded, accurate and results in highly relevant development priorities being identified which are systematically monitored by the governors. Some leaders, relatively new to management, still display inconsistencies in aspects of action planning. The curriculum provides a broad and balanced experience for pupils. In subjects other than English and mathematics, curriculum plans insufficiently identify the range of skills and knowledge to be progressed across the school or where, particularly, numeracy can be supported. Consequently, levels of attainment and progress are generalised and subject leaders do not report such details to the governing body.

The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well with opportunities presented for pupils to reinforce their good understanding of healthy living issues and the need to challenge stereotyping. Pupils' high respect for, and tolerance of, others are the result of the established ethos within the school

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based on the good promotion of equality.

Governors gain a good knowledge of the school through their visits and reports. It enables them to raise questions over aspects such as reading schemes. During such visits they miss opportunities to talk more formally to pupils to identify their views about school life. Checks on adults are rigorously carried out, annual child protection training takes place and staff who join the school later have an interview to ensure their understanding. Safeguarding is good.

Communication and partnership with parents are a strength. The use of a social networking site complements the more traditional methods of communication. It has had the positive impact of helping to establish contact with some 'hard to reach' parents. The great majority of those responding to the questionnaire agreed that they are kept well informed. Pupils also benefit from some well-established partnerships with the local schools. This has resulted in pupils benefiting in sport, from science and mathematics workshops for pupils with gifts and talents and coaching about money skills by a national bank.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



8 March 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Merton Junior School, Basingstoke RG24 9HB**

You may remember my recent visit. You were eager to tell me about your school and I listened carefully to what you told me. I believe yours is a good school.

You are taught well and make good progress. You also told me that lessons are 'fun', that you really enjoy the projects that you are set, and that you enjoy school. Your above average attendance shows this!

Whilst most of you are challenged by the work set, I have asked that all of your teachers plan work that ensures you all make good progress in lessons. You could help by telling them when you are finding the work too hard or too easy. I have also asked that their questioning ensures that you have to think hard when answering. I have asked that the school organises a writing opportunity where you can get back detailed information from teachers about how to improve.

I was very pleased to see that you behave well. You told me you feel safe and that if there are any incidents then you know the school will act to help you. The way the school cares for you is excellent and this helps you concentrate on your work.

Your headteacher leads the school well and, like the other adults, wants things to improve even more. The school makes good plans for the future but I have asked that all leaders make sure they can accurately see the improvements made by any changes they introduce. I have also asked that all subjects show how they support your mathematics and English skills. Also, that your knowledge and skills in, for example, history, progress well.

Thank you again and I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pye  
Lead inspector

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