

Merton Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116004
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	357862
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Hood
Headteacher	Larissa James
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and observed seven teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils, and a small number of parents and carers bringing their children to school were also spoken to. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at analyses of pupils' progress, minutes of the governing body meetings, development planning and monitoring, local authority reports, a range of policies and procedures including those associated with safeguarding, curriculum planning documents and a sample of pupils' work. They also scrutinised questionnaires returned by 41 parents and carers and 15 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve attainment in reading and mathematics as well as it has improved it in writing.
- Whether provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective enough to ensure they achieve as well as their peers.

Information about the school

Merton is a small infant school. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although a few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high when compared to national figures. The most common of these are related to moderate learning and behavioural, emotional and social needs. The school holds the Enhanced Healthy School and Eco Bronze Awards. The governing body provides a breakfast club for pupils in this and the adjacent junior school, which was also inspected. A pre-school group shares the school site and a range of private organisations provide after-school clubs. These settings were not inspected by this inspection team.

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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Merton Infants is a good school. It has improved well since the last inspection and continues to do so, with some aspects of provision already being outstanding. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have created a very good staff team who, together with the governing body, play an effective role in supporting monitoring and development. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well and is fully involved in many aspects of the school's work. Rigorous and accurate self-evaluation ensures weaker aspects of provision are speedily identified and addressed. These strengths give the school a good capacity to improve further.

Pupils achieve well. Attainment is rising and is broadly average. Pupils' progress in English is excellent, with an increasing number reaching or exceeding the levels expected for their age, especially in writing. Having raised the level of challenge this academic year, reading and mathematics have improved well, with attainment levels in reading now much closer to those seen in writing. Attainment in mathematics remains lower than that in English. Pupils' lack of experience in tackling mathematical problems results in fewer exceeding the levels expected for their age than in English. It is a current school improvement priority, and is beginning to be tackled successfully. Pupils are now developing these problem-solving skills at a good rate, although there has been insufficient time for them to make up for past weaknesses. Pupils enjoy school and work hard in lessons, beginning to take responsibility for their learning through checking how well they are doing. They are well prepared for the future. Behaviour is good, the result of very good relationships and the excellent support in place for pupils with behavioural or social skills needs. This makes a major contribution to learning. Pupils are well aware of how to live healthy and safe lifestyles. Most get on very well together and contribute well to school and local community life, also raising funds for charities in this country and overseas. The school works very hard to ensure that it prevents discrimination and staff are successful in building a caring and cohesive community. The school is aware, however, that pupils' awareness of religious and cultural diversity beyond the local area is limited.

The highly stimulating, innovative and exciting curriculum enthuses and motivates pupils especially well and is exceptionally well tailored to meet individual pupils' needs. This is backed up by the excellent support provided for those pupils who face challenging circumstances that make them vulnerable. High quality intervention groups provide especially well-targeted activities for those pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. This ensures these pupils achieve as well as their classmates. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and excellent in English, where skilled assessment helps provide outstanding support for pupils whose progress slows as well as challenge for the more able. The school is beginning to see success in its efforts to match this quality in mathematics, although the full effect of this on attainment is not yet apparent. Recently

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improved procedures for promoting good attendance have raised levels to average. A few parents and carers do not ensure their children attend regularly enough, and this adversely affects their progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics to at least that achieved in reading and writing by ensuring an increasing number of pupils exceed the expected level, through providing more opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in problem-solving activities, including in topic work.
- Build on and extend the procedures for raising attendance by helping all parents to recognise the importance of good attendance.
- Improve community cohesion and pupils' religious and cultural development through providing more opportunities for them to gain an awareness of diversity both in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children's range of skills and knowledge is below that expected for their age when they start school, especially in their language and social skills. They make good progress in Reception. ♦ Most achieve the levels expected for their age although few exceed them, therefore attainment is slightly below average on entry to Year 1. Oral language skills develop really well, however, with children learning to explain things clearly. Throughout the school, reading and writing skills develop exceptionally well because of the excellent programmes and support in place. Writing has been strong for the past few years, with progress in reading accelerating this year as a result of excellent teaching and support. Year 2 pupils' attainment is well on course to rise further in these subjects. Pupils read confidently, using their good awareness of letter sounds and patterns to read new words, then checking their meaning in a thesaurus. They understand the importance of making their writing interesting and successfully use adjectives and connectives to enliven their writing; for example, describing 'shimmering coloured stars' in a poem or making a story flow by using words like 'next' or 'eventually'.

In last year's national assessments, attainment in mathematics was lower than in English. Reasons for this were thoroughly investigated, with mathematics becoming an improvement priority. As the result of pupils' eagerness to learn and their response to the highly challenging targets teachers set, pupils made outstanding progress last term. Pupils are becoming very skilled at calculating accurately using tens and units and more skilled at using these to solve mathematical problems. For example, Year 1 pupils were very confidently working out how to solve subtraction problems independently.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are also increasing their progress. For example, in Year 1 an excellent intervention programme helped these pupils to gain a good understanding of three-dimensional shapes, achieving the levels expected for their age. Exceptionally good moral and social development helps pupils to recognise right from wrong and to behave well, although a small minority find this difficult. Very good assemblies help pupils to reflect on the important things in life. Their awareness of the different religions and cultures of fellow pupils is good, although understanding of diversity in the wider world is less secure. Pupils' knowledge of healthy foods and their enthusiasm

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for taking part in the many sports activities helped achieve Healthy School status. Work for the Eco Bronze award was supported by the 'Rainforest Topic', research from which was presented to the local community wardens. Productive links in the locality, especially that with a senior citizens home, contribute well to the community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

A major reason for the curriculum being outstanding is the way in which it is adapted for different individuals, addressing exactly what needs to improve through exceptionally well-matched activities. The skills-based approach is delivered through a range of topics which enthuse pupils and motivate them exceptionally well. Very good cross-curricular links have led to pupils doing exceptionally well in English. There are good opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills too, but until more recently staff have not always capitalised on this. These strengths have significantly supported improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection.

Consistently good teaching in the past few years has secured good learning and progress. An increasing proportion of outstanding lessons are being seen, as is evident in the excellent progress made in many aspects of pupils' learning. Curriculum advice supports staff exceptionally well, including the highly skilled learning support assistants, who make a major contribution to learning. This is most notable in the excellent intervention programmes which support pupils so well. For example, this ensures the vast majority of

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pupils quickly learn to build new words from using the letter sounds. Adults are skilled at keeping pupils on task and especially good at ensuring they use number lines or 'phonic rulers' to support independent work. Good behaviour management ensures a brisk pace is maintained throughout activities. In lessons and in marking, pupils' progress is assessed well, with adults regularly discussing pupils' targets with them and setting new challenges. These strengths continue to be refined and improve.

Very regular and rigorous tracking and analysis of pupils' progress ensures exactly the right amount of support is provided when needed. This means, for example, that although the progress of those pupils who do not attend regularly is affected, they are provided with excellent support when in school. Induction and transfer arrangements are very good. All pupils are very well cared for, and the school uses its very good links with other agencies when required. Pupils and their parents and carers are very confident that they are safe and well cared for, including in the well-run breakfast club.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are exceptionally successful at inspiring staff and governors to commit to the vision of providing an education that will give pupils the best chance in life. All share effectively in helping to drive forward improvement. Very regular and thorough self evaluation ensures weaknesses continue to be successfully addressed. This is evident in the good improvement made in almost all aspects of the school's work since its last inspection.

The well-informed governing body plays an important role in the strategic direction of the school. Both staff and governors are well trained in safeguarding, placing a high priority on this in ensuring that pupils are safe and free from harm at all times. The school site is secure and all safeguarding policies and procedures are effective. The school is rigorous in preventing any discrimination so there is little bullying. Individualised learning programmes support pupils' equality of opportunity exceptionally well, with the school in the process of successfully tackling inconsistencies between subjects. A thorough audit of community cohesion has been undertaken, the resulting action plan setting up opportunities to increase pupils' knowledge of diversity, although there has been insufficient time to see its impact.

The school has a very positive relationship with most parents and carers, with their views being regularly sought and responded to. They receive good information on their children's progress and effective support for helping children to learn at home.

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Partnerships with other schools and agencies contribute well to pupils' achievement and well-being.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Very good links with the local pre-school help ensure induction proceeds smoothly and children settle quickly. Their good progress is supported by effective provision and an excellent programme for learning communication, language and literacy skills. Outstanding opportunities to develop language help children to explain things confidently and begin to sound out words and write at a level much better than when they started school. Fun activities, for example when measuring and comparing the height of different dinosaurs, support their numeracy skills well. Children also progress well in their personal development, working effectively together or independently, persevering at their tasks and understanding what they are learning. Relationships between adults and children are very good, as is behaviour management so that most children behave well and show consideration for others. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and those where children enjoy discovering things for themselves. Children's learning is assessed well, with adults swiftly moving them on to new challenges when ready. The environment, both indoor and out, is carefully organised to promote learning across all areas. Role play is encouraged exceptionally well through the 'dinosaur museum', which promotes children's sense of responsibility, and they use their emergent writing skills to complete the checklists. However, the majority of other areas in the classroom that focus on different activities are not as effective in stimulating children's interest and imagination. ♦♦

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Changes in personnel have been managed very well, and new staff very well supported. Resources are well deployed and the provision carefully evaluated.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents and carers have positive views, with almost all agreeing that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and helped to have a healthy lifestyle. They also feel the school helps them to support their children's learning at home. The very large majority of parents and carers who wrote or spoke to the inspection team felt that their children were well taught and made good progress, several especially commenting on the positive quality of support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They also feel the school has improved well in recent years, praising the staff and headteacher. These views match the findings of the inspection.

Of most concern to a very small minority of parents and carers was the way that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with. Inspection evidence indicates that there are a small minority of pupils for whom consistently good behaviour is difficult and on a few occasions this upsets the other pupils. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that staff deal with this swiftly and very effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Merton Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 93 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	51	18	44	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	26	63	14	34	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	56	15	37	3	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	54	14	34	5	12	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	56	15	37	3	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	54	18	44	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	63	13	32	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	17	41	17	41	3	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	51	16	39	3	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	34	17	41	7	17	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	39	20	49	4	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	54	15	37	3	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	56	13	32	5	12	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



27 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Merton Infant School, Popley, Basingstoke RG24 9HB

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed our time talking to you and seeing all the things you do. I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their time to talk to us. We think you go to a good school and are pleased that you and your parents agree.

Here are some of the things we found out were especially good about the school.

- You want to do well and your reading, writing and mathematics is improving. We were especially impressed that you make excellent progress in reading and writing; well done.
- Teaching is good and staff plan really interesting and exciting activities. The special programmes for those of you who find learning difficult are excellent.
- Adults take very good care of you and help you learn to look after yourselves as well.
- Staff give you lots of good advice on how to improve and you are very good at checking on your targets yourselves.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors lead the school well.

Here are some of the things we have asked the school to improve.

- Help as many of you to reach the higher levels in mathematics as in reading and writing. You can help by trying really hard in this subject.
- Make sure that all of you come to school regularly unless there is a very good reason not to. You can help by making sure you do.
- Teach you more about the religions and customs of different groups of people living in this country and overseas.

Yours sincerely

D Wilkinson

Lead inspector

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