

Merrow CofE Controlled Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125160
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	359853
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Julie Sackett

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Hunt
Headteacher	Christine Martin
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2008
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. During the inspection 12 lessons and nine teachers were observed. Discussions were held with staff, governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school's improvement plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, provision for those pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, and minutes of governing body meetings. In addition, questionnaires from 118 parents and carers, and others from staff, were analysed.

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

- Children's academic progress and personal development in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- How successfully assessment is used in teaching to provide good challenge for all pupil groups and to secure progress, especially in reading and writing.
- The quality of pupils' personal outcomes.
- How effectively self-evaluation is used by the school leadership to embed ambition and drive improvement.

Information about the school

Merrow C of E Controlled Infant School is smaller than the average primary school. Pupils come predominantly from White British backgrounds. The remainder come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school holds the Healthy Schools award and Activemark.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Merrow C of E Infant is an outstanding school. As a result of her highly committed approach to leadership, the headteacher has created an excellent team spirit among all the teaching and support staff. This factor, combined with the outstanding quality of pastoral care, has been the key to the school's success.

Reflecting inspection findings, as well as very positive views expressed by parents and carers, one parent wrote, 'The school has a very special atmosphere, where the children are incredibly well looked after, cared for and taught. The staff are dedicated to providing the best education for each and every child. The headteacher leads her team in a quiet and confident manner. The children are well-behaved but they are also excited and inspired by learning about the world around them.'

Effective organisation in the Early Years Foundation Stage and careful assessments of individual children enable children to make good progress as soon as they arrive in the school. This good start is built on very well, so that pupils continue to make good progress overall, and by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is high. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress, in line with their peers. That said, progress is, at times, a little uneven across some groups. For example, a few more-able pupils do not always make as much progress as they are capable of, especially in reading.

The school's capacity to sustain improvement is good. The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and improvement needs. The progress made by individual pupils is regularly monitored by teachers and senior leaders so that support is successful in sustaining good progress. However, while the use of data to monitor and support individual pupils' progress is well embedded, there is insufficiently rigorous analysis of trends in the progress made by different groups of pupils to even out any differences. This means that planned initiatives are not always sufficiently focused to accelerate the pace of school development. The issues for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed in full. For example, the curriculum has been developed very well by developing links between subjects to ensure that learning is exciting, meaningful and highly engaging. The imaginative curriculum offers a broad span of worthwhile experiences, with excellent enrichment from a large range of visits and visitors.

The overall quality of teaching is good, and sometimes outstanding. Lessons are carefully planned to make sure that activities are appropriately challenging and that all pupils enjoy learning. At times, however, questioning is not used to fully challenge and extend all pupils, particularly the more-able pupils.

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Pupils' personal development and their wider educational outcomes in art and music, for example, are excellent, while sporting activities are much enjoyed by pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are close, warm and trusting. Pupils feel completely safe when they are at school and their adoption of healthy lifestyles is outstanding. Pupils' high attainment and their ability to work independently mean that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education. Throughout the school, pupils are active and enthusiastic learners. Their impeccable behaviour and highly responsible attitude to a range of roles and responsibilities make an excellent contribution to learning and to the school community. ♦

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attainment and rates of progress of more able pupils in reading by:
 - ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels use existing tracking information rigorously and systematically to analyse trends in pupil progress and inform school improvement
 - ensuring that teachers' questioning is consistently matched closely to pupils' abilities to provide appropriate challenge.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Observations of lessons during the inspection confirmed that, throughout the school, all groups of pupils make good progress, regardless of their background or ability. In all lessons, and around the school, behaviour is impeccable and pupils acquire excellent skills and working habits, working either independently or with their classmates. These factors help to create the high-quality climate for learning that was evident in all classes. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding that vary, but are generally as expected for their age. The good progress made across the school is underpinned by the rapid development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Pupils' keenness to succeed was clear in an excellent Year 1 literacy lesson where all pupils wanted to contribute to the story, 'Going on a Bear Hunt'. This extremely positive attitude to learning and sustained good progress have resulted in high attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.

Throughout the school, relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles is outstanding. Pupils are entirely confident that they are safe at school and are listened to. Pupils are given an excellent grounding in good citizenship and in contributing to the community. This was demonstrated clearly in discussions with members of the school council and eco action group. The pupils' very high level of enjoyment in their learning is reflected in their above average attendance rates. Their outstanding achievement, combined with their interest in learning, prepares them exceptionally well for their transition to the next stage of their education and for their future lives.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

Consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching leads to pupils' good progress. Lessons are very well planned, with clear learning objectives and criteria for successful work shared with pupils. Learning tasks are well matched to prior attainment. Teachers mark work regularly and give good advice about the next steps pupils should take to improve. In outstanding lessons, the high expectations of pupils, the very rapid pace of learning and challenging tasks ensure excellent progress. Teaching assistants are well deployed, not only to support particular groups of pupils but also to observe and record their learning during whole-class sessions.

The curriculum has a strong focus on basic skills and on pupils' personal development. This makes learning interesting and relevant for pupils, and promotes their emotional growth extremely well. In all lessons, pupils are well motivated by the ideas and resources presented through a well-crafted curriculum, and are keen to please their teachers and other adults. These qualities were particularly evident in an outstanding lesson in Year 2, where pupils thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of singing traditional Scottish songs in a round. A very well developed programme of visits and visitors complement the curriculum exceptionally well and contribute to pupils' excellent spiritual and cultural outcomes. For instance, one pupil spoke to her friend with enthusiasm and respect about a Muslim woman who had recently visited the school to talk about some of her beliefs.

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High quality care and support are central to the school's ethos. Staff know and look after pupils extremely well. The needs of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are identified quickly and addressed exceptionally well. There are numerous examples of where the school has worked extremely well with pupils, their families and outside agencies to help remove barriers to learning. Staff do all they can to ensure pupils come to school regularly and their efforts have resulted in above average levels of attendance. Staff work closely together, as well as with early years providers and junior schools, so that transitions to, within and from the school are extremely well managed.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, staff and the governing body are clear about the actions needed to drive school improvement, and past initiatives have clearly been successful in securing improvements, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum. The governing body monitors these actions carefully and challenges the school well on its performance. It is very supportive of the school's work, shares in the promotion of its special caring ethos, and ensures that safeguarding arrangements are fully in place and adhered to. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and accurate. Development points are acted upon, so that improvements in the quality of teaching and learning continue to be made. Leaders use a range of information to evaluate the school's performance and make effective plans for improvement, though the range of data available is not always used sharply enough in self-evaluation.

A wide range of partnerships provides excellent support for initiatives to develop the curriculum and to promote the well-being of pupils, especially those who may be vulnerable. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school and is extremely well promoted. The school has excellent links with parents and carers, successfully encouraging them to play a positive part in their children's learning. Well-established international links, including a partnership with a primary school in Uganda, are an important part of the school's good contribution to promoting community cohesion, both in the local area and beyond. A thorough evaluation has identified the need to form similar links with schools in contrasting contexts within the United Kingdom.

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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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in all aspects of learning from starting points which vary from year to year but which are generally in line with those expected at this age. The school has very successfully created a stimulating, welcoming environment in which all children feel valued so that they rapidly grow in confidence and independence. Excellent links with parents and carers and strong induction arrangements ensure that children are very happy and secure. Several parents and carers commented on how well their children were helped to settle quickly when they started school. Staff make full use of both the indoor and outdoor areas and there is a good balance between activities led by the teacher and those chosen by the children themselves. Activities are planned very well to make learning meaningful and interesting and this successfully supports the consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, progress made by the children. For example, children made excellent progress in their writing skills during an outstanding lesson when they were asked to write a shopping list of healthy food for Red Riding Hood's grandmother. However, sometimes activities in the outdoor area are not sufficiently stimulating to provide enough challenge to accelerate children's progress. Children demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They quickly learn to work and play well together and their behaviour is excellent. Adults work well as a team and the progress made by individual children is carefully monitored and used well to inform subsequent learning.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires were very happy with the school. They consider that the school is very well led and managed and has a dedicated team of staff. They agree that the school has a very warm, supportive and friendly atmosphere and almost all feel their children make good progress. Inspection evidence shows that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good progress. Parents and carers were particularly impressed with the pastoral support their children receive. Most also felt that the school dealt well with any disruptive behaviour. Evidence from this inspection supports parents' and carers' positive views. The very few constructive parental concerns, for example about how well the school helps to prepare children for the future, were followed up during the inspection as part of the general gathering of evidence. Inspectors found that the school prepares children exceptionally well for the future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Merrow C of E Controlled Infant 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 118 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 180 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	100	85	16	14	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	94	80	23	19	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	68	58	46	39	3	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	82	69	33	28	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	98	83	20	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	83	70	31	26	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	84	71	31	26	2	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)	75	64	30	25	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	77	65	37	31	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	73	62	37	31	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	68	58	43	36	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	101	86	17	14	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	106	90	11	9	1	1	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.



4 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Merrow C of E Controlled Infant School, Guildford GU4 7EA

We would like to thank all of you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking to you at playtime and lunchtime. We believe that you go to an outstanding school. This means that it does most things very well indeed.

- Your school is very warm and welcoming.
- All the adults take excellent care of you and you rightly feel very safe at school.
- Your understanding of healthy living is excellent and you enjoy taking part in the excellent range of opportunities to exercise and participate in sport.
- You happily take on responsibilities such as School Council and Eco Action Group.
- You enjoy school, always try to do your best in lessons and behave extremely well in lessons and around school.
- You are making good progress because you like to learn and the teachers know how to help you to learn well. Some of you are making a little more progress than others, though.
- Your achievement is outstanding. By the end of Year 2, your attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is high.
- The headteacher and the other leaders are very good at their jobs and know how to improve your school.
- Nearly all your parents are very pleased with your experience at the school.

What your school needs to do now.

- Help those of you who find learning easy to make as much progress in reading as you do in writing and mathematics.

All of you can help, too, by continuing to work hard and continuing to come to school regularly. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett

Lead inspector

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