

# Merton Bank Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104784
<b>Local Authority</b>	St. Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	355631
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Diane Auton

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	174
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Stephen Sykes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kirsty Haw
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Roper Street St Helen's Merseyside WA9 1EJ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed nine teachers in their classrooms. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' progress and attainment data, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records. They reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 18 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views pupils expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

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

- How effectively teaching and the curriculum build on all pupils' skills from year to year to enable them to achieve as well as possible, with a particular focus on English in both key stages and on the provision to support boys' learning and progress.
- How successful the school has been in closing the attainment gap between English and mathematics.

## Information about the school

The school serves an urban residential area. It is similar in size to most other primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a very small proportion from other heritages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well-above average.

In 2008, shortly before its last inspection, the school became federated with a nearby Church of England primary school. This is an informal or 'soft' federation, monitored collaboratively by the governing bodies of both schools, with advice and support from the local authority. The schools share an executive headteacher and also a co-ordinator of extended services and safeguarding and an attendance officer. At its last inspection, in March 2009, the school was removed from Special Measures.

Since its last inspection, the school has achieved the Active Mark, the Gold Arts Mark and the local authority's Early Years Foundation Stage Kitemark. It also achieved Healthy School status for the second time. A breakfast club, managed by the school, is provided each day during term-time.

The main school building is currently being extended to provide improved accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The work is due for completion by the end of this summer term.

**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**

**1**

## Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Very high-quality leadership combined with the energy, skills, commitment and teamwork of effective practitioners has resulted in rapid improvement over the two years since the school's last inspection. All aspects of provision are now of outstanding quality, and outcomes for pupils are excellent. Older pupils understand how much the school has improved. They are very proud of this and are highly-motivated to continue to do well.

Although most children's skills levels are considerably below expectations for their age when they join the Nursery class, their education gets off to an excellent start in the extremely effective Early Years Foundation Stage. This enables them to go on to make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. The momentum of good progress is sustained throughout the school because provision is very effective in every year group. Although attainment overall is still broadly average, it is improving very rapidly. Extremely effective support is provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and this enables them to make the same good progress as that of their peers and to be included in all aspects of school life. Attendance, although improved, is still an issue for a minority of families and is an identified priority area for the school.

Care, guidance and support, including pastoral care, are excellent and pupils play their part in ensuring this. For example, older pupils readily take on responsibilities around the school, including acting as buddies to younger ones. Pupils also make an excellent contribution to the school and local community, for example through frequent involvement in neighbourhood improvement projects with the local Renew team and through their active participation in the local authority's Young Citizen initiative. Pupils have an extremely good understanding of issues around keeping healthy and safe and they and their parents and carers strongly agree that school is a place of safety. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. The overall quality of teaching seen is outstanding. The curriculum is vibrant and creative and is very well-matched to pupils' interests and learning needs.

In the relatively short period since its last inspection, the school's achievements have been considerable, influenced greatly by the executive headteacher's outstanding leadership and the many skills and talents of school staff. The executive headteacher, supported by an effective deputy headteacher and well-informed governors, has created a strong team ethos and there is a concerted and highly-successful drive for continuous and further improvement. Actions to further raise attainment and improve progress further are clear and planned very well. However, the criteria against which their success should be measured are not set out precisely enough to give sufficiently detailed information on their intended impact. Self-evaluation is very accurate, based on regular monitoring and very effective assessment procedures. The rate of improvement since the last inspection has

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been outstanding and demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

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

- Reinforce the drive for continuous school improvement and raise pupils' achievement further by:
  - setting out more precise success criteria in the school development plan for actions to raise attainment, so that their impact can be measured with increased accuracy
  - ensuring, through the promotion and development of the school's attendance improvement strategies, that attendance matches or exceeds the national average.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Pupils show a lively interest in their work in lessons and they are very responsive learners. They enjoy working with a partner or in a group and they share and offer their ideas readily. They use their good information and communication technology (ICT) skills very well as a research tool in investigative work and when presenting their findings. Pupils in all of the year groups achieve well and greatly enjoy learning.

In 2010, most pupils reached average levels in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2; the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 in English was below average, although it was average in mathematics. In 2011, teacher assessments for Year 6 show that the attainment gap between the subjects has closed. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 is now above average in both subjects. Assessment data, pupils' current work and evidence seen in lessons all show that pupils in every year group are making good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in reading, writing and mathematics and that attainment is rising very rapidly. A gap seen in previous years between boys' and girls' attainment has narrowed considerably. This is the result of actions taken to ensure that the curriculum fully engages boys' interests. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress in relation to their starting points and abilities.

Pupils show an excellent understanding of issues around personal safety. They form very good relationships with each other and with the adults in school and they say they are confident help is on hand if they encounter any problems. Pupils and parents and carers strongly agree that school is a place of safety. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and they participate with great enthusiasm in the many activities provided to support their health, fitness and well-being. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, for example, as very influential school councillors or as very well-trained play leaders. They are enthusiastic fundraisers for charities at home and abroad. All of this, together with their rapidly-improving basic skills, contributes to equipping them well for the next stage in their education. Pupils show an excellent understanding of the high moral values the school promotes and this is reflected in their outstanding behaviour and in their caring and considerate attitudes. Attendance has improved and is now broadly average.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Excellent teaching is contributing very effectively to pupils' rapidly-improving learning and progress and to their personal development. Lessons are planned extremely well to take the range of learners' needs into account. The pace of learning is brisk and this helps pupils to make good and sometimes outstanding progress in lessons. Regular assessment means that class teachers have a very clear overview of progress and this helps them identify where extra support is needed. Teaching assistants help to support pupils' learning very effectively, especially those who have additional needs.

The curriculum promotes pupils' learning and personal development extremely well. Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities to practise and develop their basic skills, especially in writing and ICT, through work across the range of subjects. Topics and themes which are relevant for pupils make learning interesting and pupils say lessons are fun. The curriculum is enriched by many opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports and the creative and performing arts. A range of visitors and visits, including residential trips, helps to promote pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. Very good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures they enjoy full access to learning and are included in everything on offer. The school provides a wide range of after-school activities and take-up of these is very high. The well-attended breakfast club gets the day off to a happy start.

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Pastoral care is excellent and the school works extremely sensitively to support its more vulnerable pupils and their families. Attendance and punctuality are promoted well and the school works supportively with a small number of identified families to improve their children's attendance. The school collaborates extremely well with a range of agencies that support pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Staff and the governing body wholeheartedly share the headteacher's firm commitment to school improvement and achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils. Middle leaders contribute extremely well to ensuring the excellent quality of provision and to driving improvement initiatives. The school development plan, which in all other respects provides excellent strategic direction, identifies appropriate actions for raising achievement but does not define sufficiently precise criteria against which to measure their effectiveness. Regular reviews carried out each term give leaders a very clear picture of how much progress each pupil is making in reading, writing and mathematics. The school uses this information very effectively to target support and plan 'next steps'.

The supportive governing body is able to hold the school to account, knowledgeable and well-informed. Partnership with the federated school has brought many benefits to Merton Bank, most importantly the opportunity to share the inspired leadership of the executive headteacher. The schools also take frequent and mutually-beneficial formal and informal opportunities to share expertise and ideas, and this supports on-going improvements in provision and outcomes for pupils.

Parents' and carers' views of the school are mostly positive and they are appreciative of all that is done to support their children's welfare. Effective communication channels including regular newsletters, meetings, workshops, drop-ins and questionnaires ensure parents and carers are kept well-informed. The school complies extremely well with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection through very well-managed procedures and through on-going review of their effectiveness. Its inclusive ethos promotes equality of opportunity and access to educational entitlement well. The school contributes well to community cohesion through a range of partnerships and activities in the community and through its developing links with schools in Africa and in Turkey.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the Nursery class with skills levels that are well below expectations for their age, especially in their language development. They make excellent progress, so that by the end of the Reception year most children are now working securely at the expected levels for their age. They have also gained very positive attitudes and become happy, interested learners. The quality of teaching is excellent and children are provided with a stimulating learning environment, both indoors and in the outdoor area, despite limited accommodation space in the reception classroom during the interim period while building work is being completed. There is a well-judged balance of activities between those chosen by the children and those led by adults, and children are thereby supported very well in developing the skills that lead to independence.

Very effective assessment is supported by a wide range of evidence gathered through observations of the children in their activities and staff use this information very well to plan the next steps in their learning and to meet their individual needs. The setting is extremely effective in identifying and supporting children with additional learning needs. Children interact well with each other and enjoy warm, trusting relationships with the caring staff; as a result, they grow in confidence, they are happy and secure and ready to learn. They settle quickly because induction procedures are very sensitive and the staff forge the positive relationships with parents and carers that prevail throughout the school. The setting is led and managed extremely well and the staff team works together very well. Very well-planned arrangements to ensure continuity in provision between Reception and Year 1 are particularly beneficial in supporting pupils' on-going learning and progress in Key Stage 1. Provision is monitored regularly and this supports continuous improvement. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are extremely good and meet all requirements.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. All of those who responded said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. This is in line with the inspection team's judgements on the school's outstanding overall effectiveness. An inspector met with a small group of parents and carers to discuss their views of the school with them. They expressed very positive feelings about the improvements that have taken place in school since the last inspection, saying that they find school very supportive and welcoming and that they are pleased with their children's progress. Inspectors also saw evidence from an analysis carried out by the governing body of the questionnaires the school sends home to parents and carers during the year. This evidence confirmed that those who responded are happy with the school's work and with the care provided for their children.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Merton Bank 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 18 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 174 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	44	10	56	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	50	9	50	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	10	56	8	44	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	56	8	44	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	8	44	10	56	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	50	9	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	50	9	50	0	0	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)	9	50	9	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	61	7	39	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	50	7	39	2	11	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	28	13	72	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	39	11	61	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	7	39	11	61	0	0	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Merton Bank Primary School, St Helen's, WA9 1EJ**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. We found that Merton Bank Primary is an outstanding school, with excellent teaching and an exciting curriculum. It is an extremely well-led school and the federation with St Mary and St Thomas's CE Primary School is working well.

Merton Park is a very happy place for you to learn and grow together. The staff look after you extremely well and this helps you to feel very safe and secure in school. You told us that the grown-ups in school are always ready to help if you have a problem. We saw that you are very well-behaved and caring young people. We especially liked the way older pupils are such good friends to the younger ones in your school. Your education gets off to an excellent start in the nursery and reception classes and you continue to do well all through the school. Standards are rising very quickly at Merton Bank. Keep up the good work!

These are some things I have asked the school's leaders to do, because I think they will help to make your school even better.

- Make sure they set out exactly how much improvement they hope to make when they plan actions to raise attainment, so that they can measure success more accurately and so be able to help you achieve even more.
- Carry on working to help improve attendance, so that none of you miss out on any of the great learning opportunities that are on offer in your school.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by continuing to be happy learners.

My very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Diane Auton

Lead inspector

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