

Merrylands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132262
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	360422
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	David Shepherd

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eileen Patching
Headteacher	Sean Tobin
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors who observed 27 lessons taught by 15 different teachers. Meetings were held with staff and a group of pupils. A telephone conversation was held with the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, teachers' planning, safeguarding documentation and the school's analysis of its data. Questionnaires from 92 parents and carers, 42 staff and 100 pupils were received and analysed.

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

- To what extent has attainment risen and progress accelerated in English and mathematics during the past two years?
- Why does attainment appear lower in mathematics than in English?
- How consistent are teaching and assessment throughout the school?
- What is the impact on progress and attainment of the monitoring carried out by senior and middle leaders?

Information about the school

This school is larger than most primary schools, and draws its pupils from the local area. Most pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs. An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school runs a daily breakfast club. The school has gained the Healthy School status and the Activemark 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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Merrylands Primary School is a satisfactory and improving school. This is because the energy, drive and vision of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and senior leaders, are improving teaching and accelerating pupils' progress. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress because teaching is satisfactory. However, school data indicate that the progress in English and mathematics made by pupils during the last two academic years has improved significantly from that made in previous years. There are some good features in the school's work. In particular, good care, guidance and support mean that pupils enjoy school, feel safe, get on well together, lead healthy lifestyles, behave well and play a significant part in enabling the school to run smoothly.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils build on this and attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average in English and mathematics. The reasons for improved attainment are improved teaching and the systematic monitoring of pupils' progress that ensure that pupils' individual needs are being met appropriately. However, attainment in mathematics, especially in computation, in Year 6 is not as high as it is in English because the school's priority has been to concentrate on improving skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, and in this it has been successful. This pattern is replicated in other year groups throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

A notable feature of lessons is the consistently good relationship between pupils and adults. As a result, pupils try hard to please staff. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good guidance to pupils in their groups. On a few occasions, pupils working independently are left for too long without guidance and this slows down their learning. The overall objective of lessons is included in planning, but what pupils at different levels of ability are expected to learn is not. The result of this is that pupils are not always set enough challenges appropriate to their abilities. Marking is encouraging but does not consistently provide sufficient guidance for pupils, and where next steps are indicated, pupils are not always given enough time to respond to suggestions made. This means that marking does not contribute as much as it could to raising achievement. The quality of teaching and learning is not consistent throughout the school, and this means that pupils make inconsistent progress in a small minority of classes.

Senior staff monitor and evaluate progress and attainment effectively and have been successful in raising attainment in English and mathematics. This, quite rightly, has been the school's priority. However, middle leaders working in teams, some of whom are new to their roles, have not had sufficient training or opportunities to develop the skills necessary to carry out their tasks effectively. The governing body is keen and supportive. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and appropriate priorities for development are identified. This, along with the positive relationships throughout the school and its success

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in accelerating progress during the past two years, demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity to sustain further improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012, accelerate progress and improve attainment in mathematics by developing pupils' skills in computation.
- By April 2012, raise the quality and improve the consistency of teaching and assessment so that at least 80% of lessons are judged good by:
 - letting pupils of different abilities know what they are expected to learn by the end of lessons
 - correcting misunderstandings during lessons, especially where pupils are working independently
 - ensuring that marking indicates the next steps in learning and provides pupils with opportunities to correct their mistakes.
- Ensure that the monitoring and evaluation carried out by middle leaders result in accelerated progress and raise attainment in their areas of responsibility by:
 - training middle leaders in the techniques of monitoring and evaluation
 - providing opportunities for middle leaders to monitor and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility, and devise and implement plans to correct weaknesses.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Progress is satisfactory overall because pupils start in Year 1 with skills and abilities that are broadly at expected levels and develop to the point where results as well as standards seen in lessons and books by inspectors are similarly broadly at expected levels. The progress made by boys and girls is similar throughout the school although the attainment of girls is higher in reading, writing and mathematics. The school is aware of this and taking steps to improve boys' attainment in these subjects. The progress made by pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy their work. For example, in Year 6, pupils were enthusiastically engaged in devising words that were associated with a given word. They were keen to give their responses as the teacher built up a tree of words associated with a purse, the given word. Year 4 pupils were keen to offer solutions to a dilemma about whether to dig up or leave the Iron Giant. However, less-able and more-able pupils did not achieve as much as they could because expectations of their learning had not been planned effectively. In Year 2, pupils worked eagerly in small groups planning and budgeting food and drinks for a class party. However, some pupils, especially the less-able, found it difficult to calculate costs because they did not know their multiplication tables well enough.

Pupils have a good understanding about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. They enjoy physical activities in lessons and after-school clubs that help promote further

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their healthy lifestyles. The impact of Healthy School status and the Activemark award can be seen in their positive responses to this aspect in their questionnaire. Pupils feel safe in school. They behaved well in the lessons seen and around school, and sometimes their behaviour was exemplary. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local communities. For example, some act as playground pals, library monitors and in the breakfast club. Pupils have raised money for a wide range of charities at home and abroad. Elected pupils represent their peers on the school council. Pupils reflect thoughtfully upon each other's circumstances and their responsibilities in belonging to the school and wider communities. They are keen to talk about aspects of a range of cultures and ways of life. Attendance is above average and reflects pupils' enjoyment of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

Teachers' planning and classroom organisation are effective in enabling lessons to flow smoothly. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to discuss their work with a partner and this helps them to develop their speaking and listening skills well. Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language satisfactorily on an individual and/or group basis and this helps these pupils in their understanding of particular aspects of their work. The content of lessons is often very interesting and this encourages pupils to work

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hard. However, the quality of teaching, although often good, is not sufficiently consistent in all classes for pupils to make even progress.

Provision to promote pupils' personal development is included effectively throughout the curriculum. The teaching of scientific knowledge and understanding is good but in some classes pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to carry out investigations. Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their thinking and consolidate their writing skills in geography, history and religious education. Enrichment activities are varied and visits to places of interest and visitors to the school are popular with pupils. Good use is made of the school's grounds to aid learning.

The breakfast club provides pupils with good opportunities to begin the day in a calm, healthy and enjoyable manner. Effective arrangements for pupils joining the school ensure that they settle quickly. In replies to their questionnaires, most pupils responded that they were looked after well by staff. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified swiftly and suitable provision is allocated to meet their needs. The school enlists the support of all appropriate agencies and works well with parents and carers to meet pupils' special social and emotional needs, and the needs of pupils learning to speak English as an additional language. One parent wrote, 'My son takes part in all activities and is very well looked after. I think the school is fantastic.' Procedures for promoting attendance are effective. Transition arrangements are good from the Reception classes into Year 1 and from Year 6 to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Morale is exceptionally high because staff feel that their contributions are valued by the headteacher and senior leaders. There is a strong sense of teamwork, where staff work together in teams to achieve goals because the headteacher and senior leaders have instilled a sense of ambition and drive satisfactorily to improve further the work of the school. The school identifies accurately the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning and incorporates the areas for development into plans of action. However, these are too detailed and do not include enough quantifiable criteria for success, and this reduces their effectiveness.

The school has good relationships with parents and carers. As one parent wrote, 'Parents are encouraged to speak to staff about any concerns. All the staff are very friendly and approachable.' Initiatives, such as coffee mornings, curriculum newsletters, subject guides and the parents' association all help to promote this relationship. Parents and carers are

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invited into school on a number of occasions, such as for consultation evenings, parents' workshops and school events.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. The governing body is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is influential in determining its strategic direction. It is ambitious for the school to do well, is supportive and shows high levels of commitment. Recent changes in membership of the governing body mean that it has not yet had time to prove influential in challenging the school to accelerate progress.

Safeguarding procedures are good. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel their children are safe in school. Staff are rigorously vetted and trained regularly in child protection procedures. Links with the local authority, local schools and the Sports Partnership are good. These are contributing significantly to improved teaching and learning, particularly in physical education activities, and help promote effectively the personal development and well-being of pupils.

The school promotes equality for the different groups of pupils in the school and tackles any racist behaviour and discrimination satisfactorily. It provides appropriate support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the needs of the most-able pupils are not always met sufficiently. Community cohesion is good. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of their local community as well as some national and international communities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress from their starting points in all areas of their learning. They make most progress in their personal, social and emotional development but their skills in speaking, reading and writing are not as well developed. This is why the school has made

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these areas a key priority during the past two years. The impact of this is beginning to show with rising attainment in these areas of learning.

Children enjoy their learning and work well independently. They are looked after well and are kept safe. Children are given good opportunities to chat to adults about what they are doing. They practise the sounds letters make, read, write, count and play with toys and other equipment. Behaviour is good and children get on well with each other and adults. The indoor and outdoor learning environment is stimulating and well organised. The balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities is good, although on a few occasions children are required to sit too long on the carpet in whole class sessions, causing some to become restless and lose their concentration.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and staff work well together as a team. Planning is thorough and provides children with an interesting range of activities that include all areas of learning both indoors and outdoors. Assessments of children are carried out well but are not always used to challenge more-able children in particular. Links with parents and carers are good. Induction procedures are good and children quickly settle into school routines.

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

Parents' and carers' views about the school were positive. Over one quarter of the questionnaires returned included written comments, most of which were positive. Parents and carers feel that their children enjoy school and that they are kept safe. They feel the teaching is good and meets their children's needs. One parent wrote, 'I am very happy with every aspect of this great school. My child loves going to school and loves her teacher. She is progressing very well and has adapted very well to school life. This is because she is surrounded by a great team of people - headteacher, deputy headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants, midday assistants etc.' This view is typical of others.

The few critical comments reflected a number of different concerns that were particular to individual parents and carers. However, a number of parents and carers indicated in their questionnaires that behaviour is not always managed well. A large majority of pupils indicated in their questionnaires that behaviour is good, and a group of pupils confirmed this when interviewed by the inspection team. Inspectors judged behaviour good and managed well during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Merrylands 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 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 410 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	57	39	42	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	54	42	46	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	36	55	60	2	2	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	49	40	43	7	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	52	42	46	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	47	41	45	3	3	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	43	47	51	4	4	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)	33	36	49	53	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	42	51	55	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	27	54	59	8	9	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	27	56	61	6	7	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	36	39	48	52	6	7	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	50	40	43	3	3	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).

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">■ 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.



30 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Merrylands Primary School, Basildon, SS15 6QS

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you. You go to a satisfactory but improving school where adults work hard to prepare you for the future. Here are some of the best things we found.

You enjoy school and get on really well with each other. Your attendance is good.

You feel safe and understand the importance of eating healthy foods and taking exercise.

You like your teachers and teaching assistants and try your best to please them.

You are well behaved and make a good contribution to the school.

Your teachers and teaching assistants look after you well.

We have asked your headteacher, teachers and the governing body to do three things to make your school better.

Make sure that you make good progress in mathematics.

Let you know what you are expected to learn by the end of each lesson and how well you have done, and give you time to carry out improvements suggested in marking.

Check on how well you are learning in all your lessons.

All of you can help by continuing to work very hard.

Yours sincerely

David Shepherd

Lead inspector

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