

# Merrylands Primary School

Cumberland Drive, Laindon, Basildon, SS15 6QS

**Inspection dates** 16–17 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Consistently strong leadership by the headteacher has ensured that teachers, governors, support staff, office staff and the pupils all work together as a cohesive team.
- Pupils make good progress in all year groups and achieve well in relation to their low starting points. Attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics by the time pupils leave the school.
- The work planned for pupils and the additional activities provided for pupils out of school hours are effective.
- Additional adults employed to help pupils who find learning difficult are very effective.
- Teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding. Regular and thorough checking of the quality of teaching by the headteacher and other senior leaders has led to pupils making better progress so that standards are rising quickly across the school.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exceptional.
- Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to their learning. They want to improve their work and are keen to do well.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent.
- Parents are very pleased with what the school provides for their children.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding, but this is not yet sufficient to secure exceptional achievement.
- Marking has improved considerably but does not yet ensure that all pupils are clear about how to improve their work.
- The neatness of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work are variable.
- Work set which recognises that pupils are now making more rapid progress and therefore working at higher levels than in the past is not yet consistent across the school.
- Expectations of the amount of work some pupils are capable of producing in lessons are not equally high in all classes.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed pupils moving around the school, in the dining room and at break and lunchtimes. They listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, including members of the school council, senior leaders, including subject and phase leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 58 responses to Parent View (Ofsted’s online questionnaire for parents) as well as parents’ spoken views. Inspectors also took account of 52 staff questionnaires and the school’s own most recent parental questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked closely at a range of documentation, including the school’s data about the progress of pupils, the school’s self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding policies and records relating to the management of teachers’ performance.

## Inspection team

Nichola Perry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sarah Beales

Additional Inspector

Mehar Brar

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil-premium funding (additional money given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been a lot of staff changes, including the appointment of two assistant headteachers.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that work in all lessons is more demanding and takes account of pupils' improved rates of progress and higher attainment, so that more pupils across the school make better than expected progress
  - having higher expectations that pupils in every class will produce a greater volume of work, specifically in writing and across a range of subjects, in the time available
  - making sure that marking clearly shows all pupils how to improve their work and checking this to ensure consistency in all classes
  - improving the quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work across the school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment by the time pupils leave the school is average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are rising quickly in all year groups. Rapid and considerable improvements in teaching have led to learning in all classes being consistently good so that more pupils than before are making better than expected progress. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress.
- Improvements in the way pupils' learning is now planned and the introduction of more structured learning in all subjects have contributed strongly to sustained improvements as pupils move through the school. Teachers are now spending less time on helping the oldest pupils to catch up. Instead, there is greater emphasis on helping pupils to extend and apply their knowledge to their learning so that all pupils are now working at a higher level than in the past.
- Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught effectively so that pupils make rapid progress in developing their reading skills. Across the school, pupils are now able to make links between their reading and real-life experiences. Even the younger pupils are starting to read with expression when they read aloud, and they show good understanding of the text.
- Pupils now write with greater confidence and improved use of basic skills, along with more interesting and exciting language, to produce work of a better standard. Much improved progress in developing numeracy skills is enabling pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge from an early age to solve problems, including those in real-life situations. Progress in developing pupils' language and communication skills has been very good because all lessons place strong emphasis on this element of their learning.
- Children in the Reception classes, most of whom start school with low knowledge and skills for their age, especially their language and communication skills, are taught effectively and are well prepared for more structured learning in Year 1. They are given interesting things to do which place strong emphasis on speaking and listening, thereby helping them to develop good personal and social skills, which the rest of the school builds on very successfully.
- Progress for pupils supported by the pupil premium has accelerated because funding has been used effectively to provide additional support. In the 2012 test results, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were the equivalent of one term behind their classmates in English. However, the percentage of pupils achieving expected progress in English was better than other pupils in the school and also when compared to similar pupils nationally. In mathematics, they achieved as well as other pupils in the school and were the equivalent of two terms ahead of similar pupils nationally. Current school data show the gap between their attainment and that of other groups in reading, writing and mathematics is reducing considerably in all year groups.

### The quality of teaching is good

- A strength in teaching is the way in which pupils in all year groups are encouraged to use 'talk' as a mechanism to help them prepare, for example, their writing. This has helped many pupils to develop confidence in speaking and improve their thinking skills. Such opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas are contributing strongly to raising attainment in writing and in mathematics.
- Teachers support and prompt pupils expertly to help them think hard and solve problems so that

they achieve well. Pupils understand well how to seek help in their learning and develop independence by talking to a partner, using their 'tool kits', (folders containing relevant and helpful information to support learning) or to search for clues on walls around the classroom. As a result, pupils now relish the many opportunities to engage in practical activities and solve problems for themselves.

- In all lessons, teachers help pupils effectively to use and apply their knowledge to their learning. Work planned is meaningful to pupils which is why they love coming to school. Although not consistent in all classes, in the best lessons teachers set work that is sufficiently demanding to ensure the progress of all pupils is better than that expected for their age. These teachers have very high expectations that pupils will produce an appropriate amount of work of a good standard in the time available. The pace of learning in these lessons is consistently fast and challenges pupils to extend and apply their skills.
- Lesson observations and pupils' books show that teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills which is helping them to improve at a faster rate than in the past. Additional adults, employed to support pupils who find learning difficult, model their interactions with pupils on the good practice used by the teachers. This results, for example, in very skilful use of questioning and discussion so that these pupils make equally good progress.
- Teaching increasingly makes links between learning in one subject and how this is relevant to learning in other subjects and everyday situations. For example, pupils' books show some good examples of writing for different purposes and in other subjects, such as history or religious education. However, this aspect is not yet sufficiently well developed to ensure that pupils are actually doing as much writing as they need to.
- Information about pupils' progress is used to set work which is more challenging than in the past. Teachers amend planning to take better account of the progress pupils make from lesson to lesson, which results in a better match of activities planned for pupils of all abilities. In the most effective lessons, teachers also refocus their teaching when it is clear that some pupils are finding the work too easy. While work is now more demanding overall, so that pupils are making better progress, it is not yet demanding enough to bring about exceptional progress and improved levels of attainment.
- Marking has improved considerably so that pupils are clear about how they can improve their work. There are some good examples of pupils amending, improving and marking their own work and that of each other, and this is helping them to take more responsibility for their own learning and progress. The school is aware that further work is required to ensure consistency across the school. Presentation and handwriting in pupils' books are improving, but expectations are variable and not high enough in all classes.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons and around the school are exceptional. This contributes to the calm and purposeful atmosphere which pervades all areas of the school. Pupils are very proud of their school and speak well of the learning taking place and the progress they are making.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils work together particularly well, whether in pairs or in small groups. They work constructively together and relish the many opportunities to engage in group activities. They are very considerate towards each other and genuinely accepting of difference.

- Pupils understand their contributions are highly valued by their teachers so that they feel safe to have a go in the full knowledge that they are allowed to make mistakes. They participate confidently in discussions and pupils of all ages actively seek to engage in conversation, including with visitors to the school.
- Teachers manage behaviour extremely well. Low-level disruption is very rare. Behaviour management is underpinned by strong, well-established and well-understood systems. Pupils have been fully involved in reviewing the behaviour policy and devising rewards and sanctions which are shared with all pupils and parents.
- Pupils say the behaviour seen during the inspection is typical. They report that pupils get on well with each other and consider the playgrounds are well supervised. They trust the adults to help and support them should a problem occur. They confirm bullying is rare and consider that this is because of the ABC (anti-bullying champions) group and the training that they have received.
- Pupils enjoy and take great pride in their role as school councillors or playground 'pals'. Both the ABC group and the school council play a very active role in the school. They listen to the pupils they represent and are listened to so that their influence is felt, including by the adults in the school.
- Pupils have received high levels of training to help them understand whole-school behaviour management. Their level of understanding about behaviour is staggering for their age. They speak knowledgeably and with maturity about how individual pupils' behaviour has been improved.
- Pupils feel very safe and their parents agree. They talk confidently about different forms of bullying, including inappropriate use of language towards different groups. They understand exactly what action to take should it occur. Pupils have excellent knowledge about steps they need to take to keep themselves and others safe.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher has provided consistently strong leadership for the school. All those who work in the school, including the pupils, are fully signed up to his high aspirations for the school and they work as a cohesive team to achieve their goals. The whole school community is immensely proud of their school and their achievements. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with what the school provides for their children.
- Effective leadership of English and mathematics has contributed strongly to rapid improvement in pupils' progress across the school in reading and writing, but most notably in mathematics. Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has ensured that children continue to get off to a good start in their education, on which the rest of the school can build. Good leadership of special educational needs helps vulnerable pupils to learn well and achieve as well as other pupils in the school.
- All adults are held strongly to account, through well-focused targets, to improve their performance and the achievement of the pupils. Staff speak highly of the good-quality additional training they receive to help them develop and improve their practice. Regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching by senior leaders has resulted in good improvement so that teaching is now consistently good. Inadequate practice has been eradicated.

- Effective planning which guides the school towards improvement helps staff at all levels to have an accurate understanding of the successful aspects of their areas of responsibility as well as those requiring further work. This element of the school's work also ensures that governors and other school leaders are able to make highly accurate judgements on how well the school is performing and what needs to be done next.
- Delightful displays are evident throughout the school. These are both informative and motivating for the pupils, and also celebrate the pupils' own work. They show very clearly the exciting and varied work the pupils do. Visits, visitors and links with families and other local and wider communities enrich well pupils' learning and help to broaden their horizons. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well through the subjects and activities provided.
- Strong support for all pupils helps them to feel safe and become happy members of the school community. A wide range of additional support, including excellent links with many external agencies, is provided for pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This ensures that all pupils joining the school, including those from other settings, settle quickly and are able to blend in with the other pupils.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Discrimination of any kind is always tackled quickly and effectively. The pupil premium funding is used well to support eligible pupils and their families. These pupils are increasingly progressing as well as their classmates because they are benefiting from the wide range of extra adult support and activities.
- The local authority has had a long engagement with the school and has provided an appropriate level of support for this previously satisfactory school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are very effective partners and critical friends of the school. They are insightful and ambitious for the school and participate fully in whole-school planning. They demonstrate an exceptionally clear understanding of all aspects of the school's performance over time, how the school reached its current position and the key priorities necessary to move the school forward. Budget management is effective so that funding is focused well on priorities for improvement. They have a clear understanding of how pupil premium funding is being used to employ additional staffing to support vulnerable pupils and to increase their rates of progress. Additionally, they play a full part in ensuring the school budget is used prudently to reward good practice and are appropriately involved in actions taken to manage underperformance. Governors make sure that the school meets all current national requirements for safeguarding pupils.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132262
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	406490

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	480
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Eileen Patching
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sean Tobin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 June 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01268 417893
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