

# Merdon Junior School

Merdon Avenue, Eastleigh, Hampshire , SO53 1EJ

**Inspection dates** 18–19 June 2013

|                                |                      |                             |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Inadequate                  | 4        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although the achievement of pupils is improving, the progress they make in English and mathematics is uneven across the school.
- Some groups of pupils do not achieve as well as others, including pupils with special educational needs and those who are more able. Those at risk of underachieving are not always identified swiftly enough.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Introductory parts of lessons are at times overly long, limiting the time left for pupils to get on with their work. Not all teachers check pupils' understanding and progress during lessons in order to identify those in need of additional support or challenge.
- Teachers' planning does not always specify the skills pupils are expected to learn and develop.
- Leaders and managers have correctly identified that the contents and range of subjects (curriculum) taught do not always promote good levels of pupils' progress. The changes they have introduced are at an early stage of development.
- Not all leaders and managers contribute enough to helping the school to improve.
- The role of middle leaders is underdeveloped; they do not contribute sufficiently to raising standards in their respective areas of responsibility or to whole-school improvement.
- Governors, although supportive of the school, are not sufficiently well informed about their role in helping to improve the performance of staff. Not all governors are sufficiently confident at interpreting school data in order to compare the achievement of different groups of pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils, parents and carers, and staff describe the school as being friendly and welcoming.
- Pupils are eager to come to school, and this is reflected in their good behaviour and high levels of attendance.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. Their levels of attainment in writing have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- By the time they are ready to leave at the end of Year 6, pupils have developed into confident, articulate and well-rounded young people.
- There is good tracking of the progress made by all pupils.
- Highly effective partnerships with parents and carers, other schools and local industry are all helping to raise pupils' aspirations of what they can achieve.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by nine teachers. Some of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors heard pupils reading and looked at their workbooks.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher; deputy headteacher; middle leaders; the Chair, Vice-Chair and two members of the Governing Body; the school's caretaker; and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors held discussions with pupils, and spoke informally to parents and carers at the beginning and at the end of the school day.
- The inspectors took account of 46 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and to a letter received from a parent.
- The inspectors observed the school's work. They scrutinised a range of documents including those related to the tracking of pupils' progress, the school's records of checks on the quality of teaching, improvement plans, the school's self-assessment, the governing body minutes and checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

## Inspection team

Gehane Gordelier, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephanie Matthews

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- Merdon Juniors is smaller than the average-sized junior school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. Fewer pupils than in most schools are supported through school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school receives funding through the pupil premium for fewer pupils than in most schools nationally. This is additional funding given to schools to support the progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after and those from service families.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school was placed in special measures at its previous inspection in January 2012. This was because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school were not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. The school was subsequently subject to three monitoring inspections by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.
- There have been changes in staff, leadership and within the governing body since the school's previous full inspection. The Chair of the Governing Body was elected in September 2012 and the new headteacher started at the school in April 2013. The deputy headteacher has taken on the role of special educational needs coordinator this year.

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

- Ensure teaching is consistently good or better by:
  - refining planning so that it reflects high expectations for all pupils and a clear focus on the skills that pupils will be expected to learn and develop
  - ensuring lessons get off to a brisk start so that teachers' introductions of lessons are not overly long, especially for those pupils capable of getting on with their work quickly
  - ensuring there is always enough challenge for pupils who are more able, and appropriate activities and support for pupils with special educational needs
  - making sure that all teachers check pupils' understanding and progress during the course of all lessons.
- Raise the achievement of all pupils in English and mathematics so that their progress is at least good by:
  - swiftly identifying any groups or individuals at risk of underachieving and putting effective interventions in place so that emerging gaps are quickly closed
  - developing the range of subjects available so that they take full account of pupils' interests and needs and promote good progress.

- Ensure that all leaders, managers and governors contribute fully to school improvement and are held to account for the difference they make by:
  - building further the capacity in the senior leadership team so that there is greater delegation and accountability across the school
  - developing the role and responsibilities of middle leaders so that they are more sharply focused on raising standards in their areas of responsibility and in supporting school priorities
  - ensuring governors receive additional training about interpreting school data so that they can challenge leaders more rigorously about the progress made by different groups of pupils
  - developing governors' understanding of performance management and how it is linked to staff's salary progression.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement has improved this year and is now more in line with national expectations. However, it is not yet good enough for all pupils across the school. Girls achieve better than boys in reading and writing, because until recently what pupils were taught in English was not sufficiently interesting for boys.
- Standards in reading remain high; in writing and mathematics, they are currently at least in line with national averages. Standards are set to rise by the end of this year, with more pupils in Year 6 expected to reach the higher Levels 5 and 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since September 2012, the progress pupils have made has accelerated. As a result, most pupils have made at least expected progress this year in reading, writing and mathematics, although they have generally made less progress in mathematics than in English.
- Overall, pupils for whom the school receives additional government funding known as the pupil premium make better progress than similar groups of pupils nationally and achieve as well as their peers in school. Those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are progressing as well as their peers in reading. However, by the end of Year 6, they are a term and a half behind other pupils in writing and a term behind in mathematics.
- Although the gap between the attainment of all pupils and the attainment of those known to be eligible for free school meals is reducing throughout the school, it has increased in writing and mathematics for those pupils in Year 6. This is partly due to weaker teaching for these pupils in the past and the accelerated progress made by those who are more able in Year 6 this year.
- Pupils know their targets and what they need to do to improve their work. However, this is better for English than it is for mathematics.
- Pupils told the inspectors that they like reading. Older pupils develop skills of inference and deduction to support them with their reading comprehension. However, younger pupils, as well as older pupils of lower ability, are not secure in their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make, and in blending different sounds. Some pupils struggle to read words that include more than one or two syllables and where vowels are followed by a silent 'e'.
- Pupils learn to write for different purposes and audiences. They are becoming adept at using persuasive language, for example, to promote an invention. Some pupils lack the strategies to help them to spell new and unfamiliar words.
- Increasingly, pupils make effective use of their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. Their mental mathematics is developing well and they quickly recognise number patterns, number bonds and place value. When undertaking a mathematical investigation in Year 6, one pupil told the inspector: 'We have to use all our maths to solve these problems.'
- Pupils' ability to calculate requires improvement because they do not have enough strategies to help them to add, subtract, multiply and divide accurately and efficiently. Younger pupils

struggle at times to make choices about what methods to use to solve problems successfully. Some pupils with special educational needs do not progress as well as their peers in their mathematics; there is currently insufficient additional support to fully meet their needs in their mathematics lessons.

- Most parents and carers are of the view that their children are making good progress. Inspection findings show that, while the progress of pupils is improving, it is not yet securely good for all pupils.

## The quality of teaching

## requires improvement

- There are pockets of good practice throughout the school, but too much teaching requires improvement to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Teachers have recently improved their planning so that it takes better account of pupils' interests and different abilities. However, some planning focuses too much on the activities that pupils will be doing as opposed to the learning and skills they need to develop. The levels of challenge identified within planning for pupils who are more able do not always build as well as they should on pupils' existing learning and skills.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough, especially for pupils who are more able. The exception to this is in Year 6, where high expectations are leading to pupils being appropriately challenged and making good progress. For example, by being entered for Level 6 in national tests.
- Not all teachers take full responsibility for meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs in their class. They do not always make best use of available resources, such as visual aids and practical mathematical resources, to enable this group of pupils to achieve as well as their peers when working independently.
- However, when provided with additional support, especially through small-group work, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in reading and writing, and this helps them to make up for previous underachievement.
- Typically, teachers' subject knowledge is stronger in English than it is in mathematics, and this is reflected in the better progress pupils have made in English this year when compared to mathematics.
- Introductory parts of lessons are on occasion too long. This results in pupils sitting passively and slowing the pace of learning from the very start of a lesson. Some teachers still spend too much time talking, and this reduces the time left for pupils to get on with their work.
- Teachers are now adapting their lessons to link with pupils' learning in other subjects or visits to places of interest. Pupils in Year 3 spoke enthusiastically about their visit to a farm, and this provided them with ideas to support their written work.
- Teachers have started to make better use of information and communication technology to support and enhance the learning and progress of pupils. A good example was seen in a mathematics lesson in Year 6; pupils were using the newly acquired tablets to investigate and compare the number of visitors to different places of interest such as to Big Ben and the British Museum.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers make good use of questions to check pupils' understanding and progress, and to identify those in need of additional support or more challenge. However, this is not typical of all teachers' daily practice.
- Teaching encourages pupils to talk about their learning, share ideas and help each other. This contributes well to pupils' personal and social development as well as to their learning.
- Teaching helps pupils to develop their skills and appreciation of different types of music and art. This makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development.
- Teachers have recently started to provide pupils with good feedback about their work, especially

in English. This includes identifying what pupils have done well and what they need to do next to improve their learning.

- Although there are some good examples of pupils' work around the school, there are too few examples within pupils' own classrooms of their work being celebrated or used to inspire others.
- Most parents and carers are of the view that their children are well taught. Inspection findings show that, while the quality of teaching is improving, it is not yet consistently good.

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

- The vast majority of pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. On the rare occasions where this is not the case, it is because occasionally, overly boisterous behaviour, especially at lunchtime, has been left unchecked by the adults whose job it is to supervise pupils in the outside play areas.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in the wide range of activities made available at playtimes.
- Pupils are polite and respectful. They display common courtesies, such as holding doors open for each other and for adults.
- Pupils say there is very little bad behaviour or bullying at the school. They understand the different forms that bullying can take including cyber-bullying and name-calling. Pupils told inspectors that they are confident that teachers would help to resolve any issues that might arise.
- The school tracks and monitors the behaviour of pupils well. Although rare, issues are followed up with pupils, and parents and carers, and this helps the school to tackle any use of discriminatory language and undesirable behaviour effectively.
- Where behaviour in lessons is less than good, this is generally when teachers do not meet the needs and interests of all pupils. As a result, a few pupils, on occasion, become restless and distracted, but most pupils still try to do their best, even when activities are dull and they become a little bored or confused.
- The vast majority of parents and carers either agree or strongly agree that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved and deals effectively with bullying. These views reflect the inspection findings.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They recognise the potential dangers of using the internet and know that they must not provide personal details.
- Since the arrival of the new headteacher, the school environment, with the hard work and good support of the caretaker, has been significantly improved. This has not only helped to make the school more organised, attractive and welcoming, but has also improved the extent to which the school keeps pupils safe during the school day.
- Staff assess levels of risk before taking pupils on visits to places of interest. They then ensure that appropriate measures are in place to keep pupils safe.
- Levels of attendance continue to rise and are high when compared to the national average.

### **The leadership and management require improvement**

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body provide good leadership. This has helped the school to accelerate the progress made to improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils, especially in the last few months. However, other members of staff in the school, as well as governors, are not all contributing as well as they could to the leadership and management of the school. This is reducing the school's capacity to improve at an accelerated pace.
- Middle leaders do not yet have a clear view of progress and standards in their respective areas of responsibility, and are not taking enough responsibility for helping the school to improve. They are not held sufficiently to account by senior leaders for the impact they are having on



raising the achievement of pupils.

- There is no clear leadership of upper and lower school or of year groups. As a result, the rate of progress in raising the achievement of pupils and improving the quality of teaching is not as rapid as it could be.
  - Teaching and support staff benefit from training and the guidance and support provided by senior leaders. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching reading and writing. The limited focus on improving staff's skills of teaching mathematics is reflected in the weaker achievement in this subject.
  - The deputy headteacher has developed a good, clear and detailed system for tracking the progress and standards of all pupils and different groups across the school. The level of detail has highlighted areas where pupils are not progressing as well as their peers. This is enabling leaders and managers to identify where additional support is needed and to promote equality of opportunity more effectively. The information about pupils' progress is now used well by senior leaders to challenge teachers about the progress made by the pupils in their class.
  - School self-evaluation, undertaken largely by senior leaders, is clear and accurate. This is helping staff and governors to work together to help the school to improve.
  - The deputy headteacher makes a strong contribution to recent changes to the leadership and management of special educational needs. Parents and carers who spoke to inspectors stated that there was a noticeable improvement to the quality of support their children now receive. However, some would welcome more feedback about the progress their children make.
  - Leaders and managers have correctly identified that the school's range of subjects is not fully fit for purpose and has at times slowed pupils' progress. Amendments have already started to be made and the curriculum is becoming more engaging and appropriate for pupils. Nevertheless, the curriculum has contributed well to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
  - Parents and carers spoke very positively about the changes that have taken place at the school in the last few months. The headteacher is described as 'a breath of fresh air' and as having 'infectious enthusiasm'. Parents and carers welcome the improved levels of communication from the school and they particularly like the headteacher's newsletter, which also serves to celebrate the successes of pupils.
  - The vast majority of parents and carers are of the view that the school is well led and managed, and would recommend the school to another parent or carer. Some parents and carers told inspectors how much they appreciate the way the school now deals with their concerns and how quickly the new headteacher responds to any issues they bring to her attention.
  - Partnerships with other schools, and services and help to support pupils who are potentially vulnerable, as well as links with Southampton University and local businesses, contribute well to pupils' learning and development.
  - The support provided by the local authority has diminished, reflecting an increased level of confidence in the leadership and management of the school.
  - The school meets current safeguarding requirements.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - School governance has significantly improved since the previous inspection, but still requires improvement and has some way to go in order to be good. Governors have developed a closer working partnership with staff and have a higher profile in the school. Governors have become more involved in school events; they have also contributed to improvements such as those made to the issuing and marking of homework. Governors recognise that, although the achievement of pupils is improving, it is not yet as good as it should be, and that teaching is not yet consistently good across the whole school. Governors are starting to challenge leaders and managers, for example about how effectively additional funding is used to support and meet the needs of those pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium. Although a few governors have benefited from training and are now good at interpreting school data, this remains an area in need of improvement for other members of the governing body. Similarly, governors need to develop their understanding of systems to help manage the performance of
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staff and how this links with salary progression.



## 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> | 115873    |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Hampshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 420395    |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Junior                    |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                 |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 7–11                      |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                     |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 217                       |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body        |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Barbara Dobson            |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Jo Walker                 |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 12–13 January 2012        |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 02380 265255              |
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