

# Merridale Primary School

Aspen Way, Wolverhampton, WV3 0UP

**Inspection dates** 27–28 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Pupils make good progress through each part of the school and leave Year 6 with standards that are similar to pupils nationally.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of good teaching and an improved learning environment.
- Almost all the pupils who left Year 6 in 2013 made or exceeded the progress expected of them.
- Teaching is good overall with some that is outstanding. Teachers use questions well to check understanding.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported very well and reach standards that are higher than other pupils in the school by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and support each other to do their best. They are proud of their school and take care of their environment.
- The school does an outstanding job of keeping its pupils safe. Bullying is almost unheard of and pupils are taught how to recognise risky situations and how to keep themselves safe.
- The headteacher and his senior team provide strong and determined leadership that is based in an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to improve. They work effectively with all staff to improve teaching and learning.
- The governing body challenges school leaders very effectively and ensure that the improvement of teaching and learning is at the centre of its activities.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always provide feedback on pupils' work which is precise and helps them to improve.
- Teachers do not always check that advice they give in their marking is followed up by pupils and that they complete the additional tasks set.
- The level of challenge for pupils, particularly the most able, is not always high enough for them to make the best progress possible.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, four of which were seen together with senior leaders. In addition, they made other short visits to lessons and to learning areas in the course of their observations of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors observed senior leaders reporting back to teachers on the quality of their teaching.
- Inspectors spoke informally to parents as they brought their children to and from school, but there were too few responses to Parent View to be considered.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, representatives from the local authority, members of the governing body, senior and subject leaders and teaching staff.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school, and looked at pupils’ books and at a number of documents, including the school’s own data and monitoring of how well pupils are achieving. They also checked planning documents, records of checks on the quality of teaching, and records of behaviour, attendance and punctuality, as well as documents relating to safeguarding and the school’s own parental survey responses.

## Inspection team

Simon Blackburn, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Walsh

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is an average -sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is above the national average. This additional government funding is to help pupils what known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority or from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- About three quarters of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

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

- Improve the level of challenge for all pupils, particularly the most-able, by ensuring that teachers take pupils' starting points into account when planning their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of marking and assessment by all teachers:
  - consistently providing pupils with high quality feedback that helps them to improve their work
  - checking that the advice they give or tasks they set in their marking are used by pupils to improve their learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school with skills and knowledge that are well below those expected for their age. They make good progress through each part of the school and standards when they leave Year 6 are broadly similar to pupils nationally.
- As a result of good teaching and an improved learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children who join Nursery and Reception, some of them with very weak communication skills, make good progress. The learning that children do outdoors is a key part of their experience and teachers make good use of all the new resources that have been made available since the previous inspection.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 fell in 2013 after a number of years in which standards were close to, or at, national averages. In reviewing the school's own tracking data and observing learning in classrooms, it is clear that pupils in Years 1 and 2 continue to make good progress from their varying starting points.
- Almost all the pupils who left Year 6 in 2013 made or exceeded expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics during Key Stage 2. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and when asked why they like the school their response was, 'because we learn new things'. Pupils currently in the school continue to make expected or better progress although progress in writing and maths in Year 4 is less rapid than in reading.
- The school has carefully used its additional pupil premium funding to provide one-to-one and small group teaching for eligible pupils in writing and mathematics. Consequently, these pupils make similar progress to other pupils in reading and writing and better progress in mathematics. In 2013, pupils eligible for pupil premium funding finished Year 6 about a term behind in mathematics and reading and half a term behind in writing. Pupils currently in Year 6 are progressing well and the gaps in their attainment are narrowing.
- Funding to provide more sport for pupils has been used to employ a specialist coach who is working with each teacher to develop their skills and planning for physical education. As a result teachers are able to provide greater challenge, particularly to the most able pupils and to offer a wider range of sports. More pupils are now involved in competitive sport and after school clubs with a positive knock-on effect on health and wellbeing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make similar progress to other pupils as a result of good, well-thought-out activities that interest and motivate them and good support from well-trained teaching assistants. A small number of pupils supported by school action in Year 2 made less progress in Year 1 but are now making faster progress in reading.
- A large proportion of pupils are thought to speak English as an additional language. As a result of the highly effective support they receive when they start school, they make good progress in all year groups and have higher attainment when they reach the end of Year 6.
- Pupils enjoy reading and continue to read regularly into Year 6. Good, brisk teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) ensures that pupils are able to break unfamiliar words up and sound them out. The pupils who read to inspectors in Year 2 used these skills well but some of the books they were reading did not offer enough challenge for them to move on to more

interesting stories and non-fiction.

- The school has very detailed information about how well different groups of pupils are doing. Leaders use this in pupil progress meetings with teachers to plan programmes that help pupils to learn more quickly. The impact of this is given careful consideration to check it is effective. Current data shows that some of the most able pupils are not making as much progress as they could be, particularly in writing in Year 5 and reading in Year 6. This is because the work that is set for them does not always challenge them to think more deeply and apply their learning to new situations.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good and is ensuring that pupils make good progress. The school ensures that the topics through which pupils learn are interesting and relevant to them so that they can see an immediate link to their own lives. The 'Out and About' week sees pupils exploring their local area and visiting many of the amenities they may have overlooked. Pupils enjoyed orienteering at a National Trust property and a visit to the local art gallery.
- Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is good and ensures that pupils who join the school with weak language and communication skills get plenty of opportunities to develop their vocabulary and practice speaking and writing. Lessons are well planned and sharply focused and the children then play within the theme of their learning while teachers and other adults make accurate assessments.
- Phonics and reading are taught well. Lessons about letters and sounds are pacy and accurate, allowing pupils to develop confidence quickly in their ability to sound out and blend the sounds into words. Teachers take every opportunity to promote reading and pupils are keen to read to the class.
- Teachers ask good questions that make pupils think and allow teachers to judge how successful their teaching is. In a literacy lesson, the teacher used questions to bring out what pupils had already learned and then to focus on the learning to come in that lesson. The questions were challenging and set high expectations for the pupils' learning. This level of challenge is not seen in all lessons and sometimes pupils find work too easy or too hard for them and as a result they make slower progress.
- Teachers encourage children to make progress on their own. Pupils use resources which are available around the room, such as the 'learning wall', without being asked to get some ideas, or reading the target cards in their books to check what they need to achieve next.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to make sure all pupils receive the help they need and this ensures that pupils who need extra support or find learning more difficult enjoy their learning and achieve well.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly. This makes sure that pupils know how well they are doing. Some teachers set extra, more challenging tasks for pupils to complete but this is not consistently done across the school and teachers do not always check to see that pupils have completed these tasks or followed their advice to improve their work.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' attitude to learning is excellent. They are keen to learn and to share their successes with others. In lessons they contribute fully and respect their teachers and other adults highly. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary.
- Pupils are proud of their school and come to school excited to learn. Their attendance has improved and is now above average and pupils are punctual to school and to lessons. The relationships between staff and pupils are extremely positive and this contributes strongly to pupils' moral and social development.
- The school does not have a school uniform. Pupils are keen to talk about this fact and enter into a lively and polite debate about the merits or otherwise of having a uniform. All pupils spoken to were extremely proud of their school and they treat it with respect. The corridors are tidy, pupils move around purposefully and politely and the playground is an energetic and vibrant place at break and lunchtime.
- Pupils are keen to take a full part in all activities within the school. There are a wide range of clubs and activities which are very well attended and older pupils monitor 'friendship stops' where pupils go if they are having problems making friends or are feeling lonely. Incident logs confirm that behaviour is excellent and there has been only one fixed term exclusion in recent years. The support offered to pupils who have difficulties working with others or in concentrating is highly effective at helping them to manage their own behaviour.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying and are taught how to keep themselves safe from these. None of the pupils who spoke to inspectors in meetings or on the playground and around the school had experienced bullying. The curriculum includes many experiences that promote pupils' ability to recognise and manage risky situations and to find out how they can minimise their exposure to them.
- The school works very well with parents to support positive behaviour and good attitudes to learning. Parents who spoke to inspectors as they dropped their children off for school were confident that the school made sure its pupils behaved well and reported that their children were happy to come to school. The school's own parental surveys show a high level of satisfaction with the work the school does. The improvement in attendance is a direct result of this but the family learning that the school organises also makes a strong contribution to improving the behaviour of some pupils.

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

- The headteacher and his senior team provide strong and effective leadership and have a clear agenda for improving pupil achievement in the school. This is based on an accurate and realistic evaluation of what the school already does well, and areas in which it needs to improve. They make well-resourced plans for school improvement and monitor the impact of actions carefully.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leader's check how well pupils are learning each half term. They observe lessons, look in books and analyse carefully the results of pupil assessments. This gives them a good understanding of how to improve standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Teachers' and subject leaders' performance is managed well. They compare their own skills as part of the performance checking process and then agree challenging targets that help to

improve their skills and the progress of their pupils. Teachers feel that this process is demanding and supportive, providing high quality training and direct support from outstanding teachers within the school.

- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The local authority has supported the leader in the use of assessment data and this has resulted in a clearer and accurate picture of the progress that children make in the Nursery and Reception classes. The outdoor learning space is well designed and used and makes a strong contribution to children's understanding of the world.
  - The range of subjects studied by pupils ensures that they get a wide experience in their learning that promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Many of these are combined into themes that interest and enthuse pupils, while providing good opportunities to develop their basic skills. There are good examples of extended writing being used in many different subjects, for example. The curriculum in sport has been extended through the use of the extra funding and the school now offers more unusual sports like handball which are ensuring that more pupils enjoy keeping active.
  - Support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is led and managed well. It is currently being led by the headteacher and other key staff in the absence of the special needs coordinator but levels of support and intervention are high and pupils make good progress.
  - The local authority has been proactive in supporting the school where needs are identified. As well as supporting data analysis in the Early Years Foundation Stage, support has been provided to improve the attainment and progress of boys in certain year groups.
  - Leadership and management are not outstanding because it has not yet secured the consistency of approaches to teaching and assessment to ensure that pupils make rapid and sustained progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance against local and national standards because they are well trained and ensure that they stay up to date with educational developments. As a result they are well able to challenge school leaders when new information is presented to them. All governors take responsibility for monitoring a strand of the school improvement plan and visit the school to speak to responsible members of staff and to view the work of the school. They understand how the pupil premium is having a positive impact on achievement of eligible pupils and they maintain a strong grip on the school budget. Governors ensure that teachers pay reflects their performance and that the headteacher is set challenging targets for school improvement. They also ensure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding meet all current statutory requirements.

## 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>	104334
<b>Local authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	440513

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>	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>	250
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Amanda Costello
<b>Headteacher</b>	Simon Lane
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 November 2011
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