

# Merton Infant School

Romsey Close, Popley Way, Basingstoke, RG24 9HB

**Inspection dates** 6–7 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils' attainment is above average in reading and average in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Pupils make good progress given their starting points, which are below national expectations.
- Good teaching helps pupils achieve well. Teachers organise and manage lessons well. This, coupled with good relationships and effective teaching, ensures pupils learn well.
- Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that children get off to a good start.
- Regular, careful checks on the progress of all groups of pupils ensure that any pupils falling behind are quickly identified and helped to catch up.
- The school is a very caring, supportive community within which pupils feel safe and behave well.
- The headteacher provides effective leadership. She is well supported by senior leaders, managers and governors. This has enabled the school to maintain its good provision since the previous inspection.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always encourage pupils to respond comprehensively to their questioning and feedback.
- In mathematics, pupils are not encouraged enough to solve practical problems or think mathematically.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, activities that children choose for themselves are not always sufficiently well planned to excite or challenge them.
- The features of excellent teaching are not shared sufficiently with all staff.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 25 lessons or part lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, the headteacher and other senior staff. Additionally, telephone conversations were held with a local authority officer and a governor.
- The inspectors took account of the 67 responses to the online Parent View survey. They also spoke to several parents and carers when they brought their children to school. The inspectors took account of the 30 staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and checks on the quality of teaching and assessment, the new curriculum, records relating to behaviour and attendance, the sports premium action plan and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read in Reception and Year 2.

## Inspection team

Janet Sinclair, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Christopher Crouch

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Merton Infant is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils in the care of the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- There is an average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also average. Some of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English.
- There is an on-site breakfast club.
- Pupils attend the early years provision full time.
- There have been significant changes to staffing since the previous inspection and a number of new staff have been appointed following the school's expansion. The school has an acting deputy headteacher pending a permanent appointment to the role.

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

- Raise teaching and pupils' achievement to outstanding levels by:
  - ensuring pupils respond comprehensively to teachers' questions and feedback so that they can make more effective progress
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills
  - ensuring that staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage plan stimulating and challenging activities for children to choose
  - ensuring that the exemplary teaching in the school is shared with other staff.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher. During the expansion of the school she has managed the many staff changes well. Merton's good level of provision has been maintained since the last inspection and pupils' progress across the school is good. There is a good staff team, pupils behave well and good teaching and assessment ensure that pupils learn effectively. This indicates that there is capacity for further improvement.
- Subject and aspect leaders (often known as middle leaders) have a clear understanding of their roles, despite some of them being new to the role. They have a good grasp of data which they use well to inform their planning. Checks on teaching and learning are supportive and middle leaders' good level of expertise enables them to support their colleagues well. For example, a mathematics progression document has been designed to fit the new curriculum and a speech and language assistant has been assigned to focus on early literacy skills.
- Clear and accurate self-evaluation and effective school improvement planning show clearly what the school needs to do next and why. Governors are involved in checking the progress of implementation, and all staff have targets linked to the improvement plan. There is an effective leadership plan which clearly sets out a timetable for all monitoring activities.
- There are regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning by senior staff, which include work sampling, short visits to classrooms and detailed lesson observations. These checks ensure that the headteacher and senior staff know what needs to be done to improve teaching. However, the exemplary teaching which exists in the school is not used as a model for others in order to achieve consistently high-quality teaching in all lessons.
- The school has a well-established process for setting targets for staff which are appropriate to their level of responsibility and linked to pupils' progress. Teachers are fully held to account for how well their pupils achieve. Staff training is appropriate and the staff spoken to were pleased with the opportunities provided for further professional development.
- Classroom activities provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils' progression through the English and mathematics elements of the curriculum is very carefully planned. Senior and middle leaders have worked well with the local authority to ensure that the requirements of the new National Curriculum are fully satisfied. Good use is made of visits and events such as 'Culture Week' to enhance the provision. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school ensures that equal opportunities are provided and leaders do not tolerate any form of discrimination. Not surprisingly, pupils are considerate of each other, work well together and enjoy each other's company. They also enjoy the opportunities they have to share their achievements in assemblies. They willingly accept responsibility, understand the distinction between right and wrong, and enjoy the opportunities provided by the school to find out about different cultures.
- The school makes good use of the pupil premium funding. Effective additional support is provided for eligible pupils and their progress is very carefully tracked.
- The school is using the primary sport funding to provide professional development for a subject leader, specialist coaches for games, workshops for staff and additional sporting opportunities for the pupils. These initiatives are aimed at ensuring that the impact of the funding can be sustained. Staff are very proud of pupils' recent success in a gymnastics competition helped by the additional funding.
- There are strong links with parents and carers, who are very happy with the school and all that it provides. They are kept well informed through regular newsletters, curriculum information and attendance at celebration assemblies.
- The school receives a formal visit annually from a local authority representative, and some additional support, which it appreciates.
- The school ensures that all current safeguarding requirements are fully met.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors, a good number of whom are fairly new, are developing their roles well. They fulfil their statutory duties effectively, making sure that all safeguarding training, policies and procedures are in place, and provide a good level of challenge to the school. Governors know that teaching and learning are good because the headteacher keeps them informed through her termly reports and her judgements are confirmed by the local authority. The business manager keeps governors well informed about the state of the school's finances, including the pupil premium and how it is spent, which they

carefully review. They know how well pupils in the school are doing because they understand the data on pupils' progress, which they check carefully. All governors undertake appropriate training to develop their knowledge and skills. They are involved in setting targets for the management of the headteacher's performance and have a firm grasp of the process in place for all staff. They reward good teaching and, when necessary, deal with underperformance.

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

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are typically well behaved in lessons, around the school and at break times. They know the sanctions that apply if they misbehave and think that they are fair.
- The school has clear policies and procedures to promote good behaviour, and pupils' behaviour is managed well.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work, enjoy their lessons and have good relationships with staff. They are considerate and orderly and treat adults and each other with respect. In lessons, pupils support each other and listen carefully to the teacher's instructions. Occasionally, when lessons do not engage them sufficiently, they become fidgety and lose interest.
- Although there have been several exclusions, these have been handled well and pupils reintegrated effectively.
- Pupils enjoy being school councillors and are proud of the fact that they help others and step in to stop arguments. 'Play pals' look out for children who need support.
- The school uses circle time and assemblies to discuss bullying and its effect on others. However, pupils are not entirely clear about what constitutes bullying. They spoke of some falling out and unkindness but not the persistent unkindness of one pupil towards another. There are no recorded incidents of bullying.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now close to the national average. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils are punctual and enjoy coming to school.
- The breakfast club provides a healthy breakfast and a good range of activities for pupils, giving them a good start to the day. At lunchtimes, pupils are orderly, taking turns calmly and politely.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The school provides a safe environment for its pupils. Pupils learn about how to stay safe through, for example, road safety instruction, regular fire drills and instruction on the safe use of tools and equipment in lessons.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know that adults will help them if they need it. They also know that 'play pals' are there to play with them if they feel lonely.
- The school takes very good care of its disadvantaged pupils, ensuring they get the help they need.
- Parents and carers who responded to the online Parent View survey, and all of those spoken to during the inspection, agreed that behaviour is good and that the school keeps their children safe.

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

- Good teaching since the last inspection has enabled pupils across the school to make good progress.
- Teachers ensure that lessons run smoothly and have a clear structure, helping pupils to engage and enjoy their learning.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning, particularly the learning of disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English. They are calm and supportive and work well with pupils to ensure that they understand what they are doing. In a good example, a teaching assistant was observed boosting the confidence and self-esteem of a small group of pupils as part of their literacy work. Those pupils at an early stage of learning English also benefit from interpreters.
- Teachers use guided reading sessions well to help pupils improve their reading and comprehension. Pupils who read to inspectors used their phonic (letters and sounds) skills confidently to work out unfamiliar words.
- Teachers set targets for pupils and mark their work regularly and conscientiously. However, they do not

always give feedback in a way that is easy for pupils to understand or give them enough opportunities to act on their guidance. As a result, pupils are not always clear about how well they have done and what they need to do to improve their work.

- Teachers do not always question pupils in a way that develops their understanding. This sometimes limits their progress in lessons.
- Homework is used well to reinforce reading, spelling and handwriting and there are excellent 'maths at home' packs for pupils and their parents and carers.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Children start in Reception with weak levels of knowledge and skills. From insecure starting points the progress they make throughout the school is good. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2014 was at nationally expected levels in writing and mathematics, and above average in reading. The pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive targeted support that helps them to make good progress towards their learning goals; they achieve well.
- Pupils at the early stages of learning English receive support from external agencies and tailored help with their vocabulary, helping their language skills improve quickly. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to other pupils in the school.
- There are effective systems in place to track pupils' progress. Additionally, regular checks on the progress of all groups help the school to identify pupils who are not doing well enough and ensure they get the help they need to catch up. This is helping to close the gaps in the performance of different groups and ensure that the school is promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- Good classroom organisation helps teachers to challenge the most able pupils effectively, and they make good progress.
- The 2014 unpublished data shows that pupils in Year 2 who are supported by additional funding attained better than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. They were approximately one term behind in writing and mathematics compared with other pupils at the school. Pupils currently in the school are achieving well.
- Pupils' performance in the Year 1 phonics check was below the national average in 2014. However, those who re-took the check in Year 2 did well. There is a good emphasis on phonics across the school, helping pupils to make good progress.
- Regular guided reading helps pupils to achieve well. Additionally, the school has set up a good system to encourage pupils to read regularly to their parents or carers at home.
- Pupils have good opportunities to write across all subjects, including religious education and science, and the work in their books is well presented, neat and methodical.
- There is a strong emphasis on number calculations in mathematics and pupils generally achieve well in this area. However, they do not get enough opportunities to solve practical mathematical problems. This sometimes limits their ability to use their mathematical knowledge or investigate patterns in number in everyday situations, and thus can slow down their progress.

### **The early years provision** is good

- Children in the Reception classes achieve well, although because of their low starting points they have not always reached the nationally expected levels across the areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1.
- All groups of children make similarly good progress. This is due to careful checks on how well they are doing using online learning journals and targeted support to ensure those falling behind catch up. Excellent features of the provision are the groups that have been set up for confidence building, self-esteem and speech and language, and the starter group for those at an early stage of learning English.
- The good teaching of phonics helps to develop children's reading and writing. This was seen in an effective guided reading session that children thoroughly enjoyed.
- Good relationships at all levels ensure children behave well and enjoy their learning.
- Although children can choose different activities, outside or inside, they are not always planned well

enough to provide exciting challenges and this sometimes slows children's progress.

- Safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are fully in place and safety within the classrooms is good.
- There are very good links with parents and carers through effective induction and workshops. In the early morning, parents and carers can read with their children in the classroom.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Excellent initiatives, such as the mathematics skills progression sheets, the online learning journals and the special learning groups, are notable and successful.

## 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>	116004
<b>Local authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	443775

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	215
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Martin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Larissa James
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25–26 January 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01256 324507
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