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Larissa James  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs James

### **Short inspection of Merton Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 25 September 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have a relentless drive, enthusiasm and determination to ensure that Merton Infants is a highly successful school at the heart of the local community. You are supported well by the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. Through your strong guidance and support, the leadership team is very effective in reviewing teaching and learning, and swiftly takes action to improve outcomes for pupils. Outcomes are good. Nevertheless, some disadvantaged pupils do not yet attain the same standard as their peers, such as in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Achievement is particularly good in English and mathematics, but is not as high in other subjects across the curriculum.

You work very effectively with your local group of schools to share best practice in assessing and moderating pupils' work. The governing body is highly confident in, and supportive of, your leadership. Governors have a clear grasp of pertinent areas for further development, and they challenge and support the senior leadership team well.

Parents are supportive of the school. One parent wrote, 'The strong emphasis on the Merton values helps to provide children with a sense of cohesion from a wide variety of backgrounds.'

The governing body has continued to demonstrate strong leadership. It takes a very

active role in holding school leaders to account for pupils' progress. Governors visit regularly to carry out a wide range of tasks, including evaluating school systems and safeguarding, visiting classrooms, examining pupils' work in their books and accompanying pupils on school visits. They have a clear grasp of pertinent areas for further development, and challenge and support the senior leadership team well. The governors are fully supportive of the school.

The school is a very friendly and caring place, and pupils speak with great happiness about Merton Infants. They enjoy being part of the nurturing community, and they praise the staff for how well they are supported. Pupils learn in a calm and highly supportive environment. They behave very well and are very keen to learn and do their best. One pupil said that, 'Our school is brilliant and we are all friends.' The school motto, 'Aiming High, Achieving Together', is clearly apparent in the enthusiasm and keenness of pupils to succeed. During my conversation with one pupil, she said that, 'We never give up.' During breaktimes, pupils play together well, and adults ensure that they are safe. In one playground, a group of pupils played football in an enclosed area, clearly showing good manners, and were very well-behaved, without the need for an adult to direct them. The school is well maintained and the displays in the classrooms enrich the learning opportunities.

Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Pupils now have more opportunities to respond to teachers' questions and feedback, helping them to make strong progress. There are now more opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in order to deepen their understanding. Leaders wisely ensure that staff share effective teaching, learning and assessment as part of their well-chosen professional development opportunities. The progress in the early years foundation stage has been developed well.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The safety and welfare of all pupils have a high profile at Merton Infants. You successfully work with outside agencies to support pupils and their families well. Pupils feel safe in school, and parents agree with their view. Pupils know who to speak with if they ever feel unsafe. Pre-employment checks, to ensure the suitability of staff, are firmly in place. Governors visit regularly to review and evaluate safeguarding policies and procedures carefully. Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training. They know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being.

Recruitment checks are fit for purpose to ensure the suitability of all those who work or volunteer at Merton Infants. Record-keeping is thorough and leaders are effective in following up areas of concern, ensuring that pupils' needs are fully met. Pupils are aware of potential dangers when using the internet. They said that if they ever viewed anything on the internet at school that made them feel unsafe, they would tell an adult.

## Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on: how leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities do as well as other pupils; how well the curriculum meets pupils' needs and prepares them for their next steps in learning; and what progress leaders have made in the early years from the last inspection.
- Most pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. Staff support and challenge pupils well to check their understanding. The tracking of pupils' progress is sharp and precise, and additional support for pupils is evaluated effectively. In the lessons we visited, these pupils were engaged, working well and ably supported by learning assistants when required.
- In the lessons we visited, disadvantaged pupils were engaged and working well towards meeting their learning goals. These pupils receive a range of useful additional and well-planned adult support. Leaders' well-chosen activities to engage disadvantaged pupils are ensuring that they are making good progress. However, leaders accurately recognise that the progress of disadvantaged pupils should be greater still if their attainment differences, compared to all pupils, are to be eradicated.
- The school offers an effective, broad and balanced curriculum, based on the school's values. Staff are committed to providing activities and opportunities that are relevant and inspiring while at the same time meeting the requirements of the national curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils' learning is enriched by a variety of visits to extend their learning. These include visiting Southsea seaside, Portchester Castle and travelling to London on a train. Pupils' work demonstrates that they are making good progress across the curriculum. Pupils at the end of key stage 1 leave with attainment that is higher than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, including working at greater depth. This shows that strong leadership has led to many pupils making good and, for some, exceptionally strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- On entering Merton Infants, children get a very good start within this enriching and nurturing environment. The early years foundation stage leader provides effective leadership, ensuring that the planned activities have a positive impact on children's progress. The indoor and outdoor environments are well organised, with stimulating learning opportunities. For example, one group of children were role-playing working as builders, using a toy cement mixer and toy bricks while wearing hard hats. The provision in the early years is strong as the activities enable greater opportunities for children to be challenged, using insightful assessments to provide the correct support. On entry to the school, many children enter with attainment and skills below those typical for their age. Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils leaving the early years with good levels of development, and so being well prepared for Year 1, has been higher than national figures. Due to the highly effective provision, most children in Reception make very good progress during the year and a large number make rapid gains.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the wider curriculum is strengthened so that more pupils attain higher standards across more subjects
- the provision for disadvantaged pupils is further accelerated so that more pupils achieve the expected standard for their age.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Darren Aisthorpe  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the subject leaders for English and mathematics, the early years foundation stage leader and five governors. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. I also had meetings with the school business manager and a group of pupils. I spoke with seven parents on the playground and considered 42 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 29 free-text comments. I also considered responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Together with you, I observed teaching and learning across the school. I looked at pupils' learning in their mathematics books and their English books, topic books, phonics books and writing books, as well as evidence of learning in the classrooms. I observed pupils at breaktime and spoke with them informally. I also considered a range of documentation, including documents related to safeguarding, the school action plan, curriculum planning, governance, teaching, learning and assessment, and the curriculum.