

Merton Abbey Primary School

High Path, Merton, London SW19 2JY

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have tackled successfully, with persistence and determination, the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. As a result, the school is now good.
- Leaders, including governors, have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further improvement. Development planning is focused sharply on the appropriate priorities and is checked regularly for the impact that actions are having on driving up standards across the school.
- Middle leaders' strategies to improve the school are new. They are not yet fully embedded or having maximum impact as they do not monitor the implementation and impact of these new strategies.
- Leaders have ensured that there is an effective approach to teaching across the school. They have made regular checks and acted swiftly to rectify any weaknesses. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning across the school is now good.
- Most pupils make good progress due to effective teaching. Just occasionally, teachers do not have high enough expectations, therefore do not provide pupils with work that sufficiently challenges them.
- Parents and carers rightly have renewed confidence in leaders.
- The quality of early years provision is good. Staff help children to settle quickly and make strong progress from their starting points. However, on occasion, children lack the confidence to make the most of some activities.
- Pupils behave well and relate extremely well to each other and to staff. Pupils' strong social awareness and enjoyment of school are clearly evident during break times. They exchange ideas and aid each other's learning during lessons.
- Staff and pupils are proud of the school and its nurturing ethos. The school's warm and inclusive culture provides an environment where pupils feel safe and valued.
- The school offers a curriculum that enables pupils to build their knowledge and skills effectively over time, particularly in English and mathematics. However, this is not as well developed in other subjects. Furthermore, pupils do not write in as much depth outside of their English lessons.
- Governors share leaders' ambition and vision for the school. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and have made some innovative, long-term decisions which have been successful in improving achievement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - subjects other than English and mathematics are taught in sufficient depth
 - middle leaders have a greater effect on the quality of teaching in their subject.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the outcomes for pupils, by:
 - in the early years, developing children's confidence and independence when working at less structured activities
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils, particularly the most able pupils, and challenging them appropriately in their written work
 - giving pupils more chances to produce high-quality written work in different subjects
 - ensuring that all teachers expect a high standard of presentation in pupils' work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The headteacher and leaders, together with governors, have established a clear vision for improvement and set high standards for all pupils. Well-focused teamwork has secured good leadership, teaching and pupils' achievement. As a result, the school is more effective and continues to improve.
- Leaders have strengthened the way they plan and implement actions to bring about improvement. This is evident in the effective use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Focused leadership sustains the strong development of pupils' personal qualities. Support given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has secured their good achievement.
- Leaders' monitoring of the school is rigorous and effective. Leaders check the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility carefully. New systems to track pupils' progress are utilised well to check where teachers are making the most difference. This helps ensure that leaders' evaluations of the effectiveness of the school are broadly accurate and useful to plan further improvements.
- However, some checks by middle leaders are not focused enough on pupils' learning. For example, leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics do not look at the quality and depth of pupils' learning in their subjects.
- Leaders' actions to improve the school have been effective and brought about rapid improvement, particularly in the last year. Staff have received training on new strategies which enable pupils to master aspects of their learning in mathematics. There have been changes to the way reading is taught.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum to include a broad range of experiences, which add depth and meaning to pupils' learning. Leaders base this on a clearly identified rationale for the curriculum design, which identifies long-term goals for pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, cultural, social and moral development is catered for well. They understand and learn to value differences, including in relation to faiths, beliefs and abilities. Pupils are included and valued by staff and this helps pupils to understand that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and that there should be equality in opportunity for all. Fundamental British values are promoted well.
- Leaders make effective use of the physical education and sport premium. Money has been targeted towards providing additional equipment and raising pupils' levels of participation. As a result of this spending, greater numbers of pupils are attending extra-curricular clubs and enjoying success in competitive sporting events.
- Parents are supportive of the school and, in particular, the care and guidance that the school provides. One parent, summing up the views of many, wrote: 'The school has a nurturing atmosphere, pupils respect the staff and pupils are very well behaved.'

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Governors have responded proactively to external guidance and have strengthened all areas of their work. The co-chairs of the governing body have led governors in identifying gaps in skills and expertise. These have now been addressed through the targeted recruitment of new governors with particular skill sets.
- Governors receive a range of training, from both within the school and the local authority. This enables governors to develop their skills to take on specific areas of responsibility and provide support and challenge, for example in areas such as safeguarding.
- Governors receive timely information from school leaders on how well teaching supports learning, and this is used well to ask searching questions. They follow this up effectively by regularly visiting the school.
- The sharing of responsibilities among governors has ensured that all aspects of the school are carefully reviewed. Where weaknesses appear, governors ask astute and challenging questions, which lead to useful actions by leaders, when necessary.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The single central record of checks on staff and visitors is up to date and compliant. Checks carried out on new members of staff and volunteers are thorough and well managed.
- Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding, which is a high priority for the school. Staff receive high-quality training in safeguarding and are clear about the actions they must take if they have concerns about a pupil or a member of staff. Comprehensive safeguarding systems are in place, are fully embedded and permeate the life of the school. School leaders ensure that safeguarding issues are quickly identified. Close liaison with outside agencies, including the police, result in timely responses to pupils' needs.
- Pupils report they know who to go to if they are concerned about anything and that they would be taken seriously. They also believe that school staff would take effective action to support them, should the need arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers know their pupils well. Improvements in assessment procedures have resulted in teachers having a secure knowledge of what pupils can and cannot do. Teachers use this information to plan activities which are matched accurately to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils across the school are making strong progress from their different starting points.
- Positive relationships exist between adults and pupils. Teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and provoke deeper thinking about pupils' learning. They are not prepared to accept any answers without a clear rationale articulated by pupils. As a result, teachers secure a depth of knowledge before moving

on to the next learning point.

- The teaching of mathematics is typically good. Staff training in the new mathematics curriculum has been effective in raising achievement. Pupils' books reveal that they have many opportunities to develop their reasoning skills and solve problems across all aspects of number, shape and measure. This is leading to good progress for all pupils in mathematics, although in some year groups pupils lack care in the presentation of their work.
- The teaching of writing has been a priority for school improvement. Writing has improved because of leaders' sustained focus in this area. Leaders have recently restructured the approach to writing, with an increased spotlight on writing stamina and teaching the specific skills needed to be able to develop writing in different genres. Inspectors scrutinised a range of sources, including work in books, and found current pupils to be making good progress. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their writing skills in subjects other than English, which limits the depth of their learning.
- Whenever possible, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to develop reading skills. There are many opportunities for pupils to conduct research. For example, pupils in Year 2 researched the royal family, and in particular the Queen, as part of their topic on 'When Elizabeth met Victoria'. The acquisition of vocabulary and the development of language are high priorities.
- Teachers present activities so that pupils can work well together to solve a range of problems. As a consequence, pupils acquire the skills required to work effectively as part of a team.
- While most activities are carefully planned to meet pupils' needs, teachers' expectations of what most-able pupils can do are sometimes too low. This results in them being given work that is not sufficiently challenging, especially in writing.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. They work closely with teachers to support pupils in meeting their challenging targets. Pupils with SEND make good progress from their different starting points because adults refine tasks well to ensure that pupils experience success.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders and staff have an in-depth knowledge of pupils and their vulnerabilities. They work together proactively to support pupils and their families. Where further assistance is required, this is put in place as early as possible.
- Pupils have access to extra-curricular activities and resources in school and in the local community to assist with their development. For example, they access swimming facilities, country dancing, drama, poetry, dodgeball and street dancing to name a few of the opportunities which all contribute to their emotional and social development.
- When questioned, pupils clearly expressed their appreciation of the school's supportive

family atmosphere. They said, 'We all work well together and take care of each other even though we are from different religions.' Pupils undertake various responsibilities diligently. These include organising fundraising events such as for Comic Relief.

- Pupils contribute well in lessons because they have strong relationships with staff and each other. They are comfortable sharing their ideas and asking questions. They work enthusiastically in pairs and groups and enjoy supporting each other in their learning.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. They are confident that bullying will be dealt with quickly by staff when it happens. Pupils say that they feel safe because they know that adults will help them. They know how to stay safe when online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They conduct themselves well throughout the day, for example in lessons, assemblies and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- During play and lunchtimes, pupils of all ages either talked, read or played games together sensibly, thus meeting the high expectations of staff on duty.
- Pupils work well together. In lessons, they listen carefully and cooperate well with each other, showing respect for other people's opinions. Pupils generally work hard and are focused and engaged in their learning. Inspectors observed no incidents of low-level disruption.
- Pupils clearly enjoy school, and the rate of attendance is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who regularly miss school is below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders and teachers have focused successfully on improving pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. Over time, across year groups, pupils' developing skills show good progress in mathematics and continued improvement in reading. Pupils' progress in writing has fluctuated more widely.
- Published assessment information for outcomes at the end of the 2017/18 academic year indicate that, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress was in line with that made by other pupils nationally from similar starting points in mathematics. This was not the case in reading and writing. Leaders recognise that further raising pupils' progress remains a focus for the school and have put effective plans in place.
- At the end of Year 2 in 2017/18 the proportions of pupils assessed as working at both the expected standard and at greater depth were broadly in line with national averages for mathematics. However, the proportions working at the expected standard in reading and writing were below average.
- The school's assessment information shows that, across the school, current pupils are making strong progress from their different starting points. This evidence is supported by the work in pupils' books. Consequently, greater proportions of pupils in Years 2 and

6 are on track to meet both the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been inconsistent in the last two years. However, effective teaching has led to considerable improvements and a greater proportion of pupils are well placed to reach the expected standard this year.
- Pupils read with fluency and expression. When reading unknown texts, pupils use their secure knowledge of letter sounds to help them. Pupils read regularly, both at home and in school.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are good. They make good progress because they are well supported by teachers in and out of class. Pupils with SEND make good progress against their targets because the staff know them well and provide appropriate support. Parents appreciate the support that the school gives their children, both academically and emotionally
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar good progress to other groups in the school. This is because the school works effectively to provide timely support.

Early years provision

Good

- A large proportion of children enter the early years provision with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. Particular weaknesses are in children's speech and language skills, as well as in their personal, social and emotional development. From these low starting points, children make strong progress in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Children take part in purposeful and engaging activities, and make good choices when learning independently. Teachers make good use of questioning to challenge children's thinking and deepen their understanding. As a consequence, children develop key skills in speaking, listening and justifying their answers.
- Routines are well established. Children respond well to adults and behave well. Disadvantaged children and those who have additional needs are supported sensitively so that they make good progress. Children whose starting points are low are given effective support to catch up quickly. As a result, children are able to develop well both socially and emotionally.
- Children engage very well in most activities which are led by adults. Because of high expectations, children listen carefully and can explain their learning well. Children's concentration levels are good. They share well and take turns with each other. When undertaking and completing challenges set by teachers, children's ability to work independently is usually good. However, children are not as confident when choosing less structured activities; this limits their progress in certain areas.
- Adults support children's personal and social development well. They have established effective partnerships with local providers to ensure a smooth transition into school. Whether joining in Nursery or Reception, children settle quickly. They learn to follow the school's routines and understand the importance of good behaviour.
- Parents are encouraged to play an active part in their children's learning. Parents told

inspectors that staff are approachable and they welcome the home visits and clear communication between school and home.

School details

Unique reference number	102638
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10088877

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-Chairs	Mamie Barden and Frances Cresswell
Headteacher	Michael Bradley
Telephone number	020 85427129
Website	www.mertonabbey.merton.sch.uk
Email address	mertonabbeyprimary@mertonabbey.merton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 March 2017

Information about this school

- Since the inspection of the school in March 2017, the school has had several changes in staffing, including new middle leaders and teachers.
- Merton Abbey Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background, with pupils from any other White background forming the next sizeable ethnic group.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average and in the top 20% of schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classrooms alongside school leaders, and additionally observed intervention groups.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, teachers and groups of pupils. Inspectors met with the headteacher, the two co-chairs of the governing body, one other governor and the school improvement adviser from the local authority.
- The inspection team worked in partnership with the school's senior leaders when analysing information about the school. The inspectors looked at pupils' outcomes, the school's evaluation of its own performance, minutes from governing body meetings, the school development plan, and monitoring and evaluation records of the quality of teaching. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also checked.
- The inspectors walked around the school with pupils to find out more about their work from displays and extra-curricular activities. Inspectors interviewed groups of pupils from across the school to determine their views on behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in the playground, at playtime and in the lunch hall. They listened to pupils read and looked at work in pupils' books, alongside senior leaders.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents by analysing the 24 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's own evaluation of parental responses to an in-house questionnaire. They also spoke informally to parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account the views of pupils by analysing the 157 responses to the online pupil survey as well as speaking to pupils during the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 37 staff who responded to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Danvir Visvanathan, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lisa Farrow	Ofsted Inspector
James Robinson	Ofsted Inspector

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