

Inspection of a good school: Mereworth Community Primary School

39 The Street, Mereworth, Maidstone Kent ME18 5ND

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 July 2022

Outcome

Mereworth Community Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and keen to come to school each day. They say that their teachers always make learning interesting. Many also enjoy reading stories to the school dogs, Nala and Copper. Pupils behave as positive role models for each other. They can nominate each other for a 'high five' reward for demonstrating the five school values. One pupil stated, 'I nominated my partner for always showing great teamwork and helping me in mathematics.'

Classrooms are vibrant places for all pupils to learn. Pupils know that their teachers have high expectations of them. They behave well in lessons and listen intently to their teacher. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. Pupils state that bullying does not really happen in school. Pupils say that unkind words and behaviour are not tolerated by anyone.

Following the COVID-19 restrictions, leaders are very keen for pupils to make up for any opportunities that they have missed. Children learn to swim each year as soon as they join Reception. In forest school, they enjoy cooking food from the era of history that they are studying in class. During sports day, they cheer and clap joyfully for each other, regardless of their house or year group.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils benefit from a curriculum where leaders have considered the ambitious knowledge and skills that they want all pupils to learn. Because of this, pupils can confidently apply their prior knowledge to new learning in many different subjects. For example, in physical education, pupils in Year 6 can explain how the racket skills learned in Year 4 can be combined with the skills learned in Year 5 to win a tactical game of tennis against an opponent.

Leaders use assessment to carefully check where pupils have any gaps in their knowledge. This has been particularly important because of the disruption caused by

COVID-19. Where needed, learning has been reorganised to provide extra support to help pupils catch up. In mathematics, however, the closure of these gaps is taking longer for a small number of pupils in Years 3 to 5. While leaders have put in place additional support for these pupils, this help is not ensuring that they can catch up quickly with their classmates. This means that they do not have the mathematical knowledge and understanding to achieve as well as they could.

Staff receive effective training to teach the curriculum in a way that supports the needs of all pupils. Leaders identify pupils' additional needs quickly. They write detailed plans that set out the arrangements needed to meet pupils' needs in lessons. This means that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Specialist speech and language teachers and play therapists work with pupils so they develop the communication and social skills they need to articulate themselves clearly.

All staff have all had the training they need to ensure that pupils learn to read confidently and fluently. Teachers take time and care to make sure that all pupils can precisely sound out all the letters of the alphabet and then blend them to form words. This enables all pupils, including pupils with SEND, to become keen and happy readers. In Reception, children develop independence in their own writing. They use the colourful classroom displays to remind themselves how to spell new vocabulary. They do not have to wait for teachers to come and help them.

Pupils' personal development is a real strength in this school. Clubs have been carefully considered to develop pupils' interests and talents. Pupils can join the 'Rocksteady Rock Band' or join the choir to represent the school in local arts festivals. Leaders are clear about their ambition for all pupils to be knowledgeable and responsible citizens. Pupils learn the importance of respect and behaving well so everyone can learn. Through the many different opportunities they are offered, pupils learn the importance of being proud of their achievements. Pupils were keen to tell the inspector that demonstrating the school's values in a bid to win the house cup is more important than winning any material prize.

Governors and leaders know the school very well. Governors provide support and challenge to make sure that the school's priorities are clearly identified. Staff and parents and carers speak very highly of the leadership of the school. Leaders make sure that staff workload and well-being are a priority. As a result, staff feel happy and well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff have up-to-date safeguarding training. All staff know how to identify and report a concern about a pupil. Safeguarding records show that leaders take swift and tenacious action to seek help for pupils who need additional support from external agencies. Leaders carefully ensure that all appropriate safeguarding checks are completed when they recruit new staff.

All pupils learn how to keep safe when online and how to report online concerns. The personal, social and health education curriculum ensures that pupils develop a clear understanding about the importance of healthy relationships and how to have positive mental health.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In mathematics, leaders use assessment to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge due to missed learning through the COVID-19 pandemic. They have planned and implemented extra support to address these gaps this year. This support has not sufficiently narrowed the gaps for some pupils in Years 3 to 5 swiftly enough. Leaders must ensure that they continue to monitor the effectiveness of the additional support in mathematics, so all pupils develop a secure foundation of mathematical knowledge.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	118307
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10227652
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Pamela Conibeer
Headteacher	Amanda Lavelle
Website	www.mereworth.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use alternative provision.
- The school operates a breakfast and an after-school club for pupils at the school. It is managed by school leaders and run by non-teaching members of staff.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector also spoke with representatives of the governing body, including the chair and the school improvement partner.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. The inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector considered the 106 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including 69 free-text comments. The inspector also took account of the responses to

the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the school's website and policies and met with safeguarding leaders. The inspector also spoke to pupils, staff and governors and scrutinised school records of the safeguarding checks on adults working in the school.
- The inspector reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of governing body meetings and records of behaviour incidents.

Inspection team

Michelle Lower, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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