

Inspection of Merstham Primary School

London Road South, Merstham, Redhill, Surrey RH1 3AZ

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to Merstham Primary School. Adults help every child to feel happy and safe and to thrive. The school is a community where everyone is valued and respected. Relationships are heart-warming and caring.

Leaders expect high standards for how pupils behave and interact with each other. This starts when children enter Nursery. From the very start, children receive the right support to settle in calmly. They follow the school's rules and play happily. Across year groups, pupils are warm-hearted. Because of this, bullying is unheard of. Leaders act swiftly if any concerns arise.

Kindness ambassadors, school councillors and house captains are some of the important roles that encourage pupils to demonstrate their leadership skills and talents. Leaders also prioritise pupils' physical fitness through activities and competitions. Pupils are curious and eager to explore their learning in the well-resourced new early years outdoor environment and library. Pupils love to go on trips and welcome special visitors to their school.

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), experience a broad curriculum. Teachers are ambitious for pupils to achieve well. They ensure that pupils get the support they need in readiness for secondary school.

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

The trust has courageously steered the school through an unprecedented period. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the school suffered catastrophic flooding. Trust leaders wasted no time in dealing with this. They prioritised pupils' education through strategic thinking and by utilising internal resources. While the school is now back on its feet, leaders recognise the disruption caused to pupils' education. They are redoubling efforts to close any pupils' learning gaps that remain.

Teaching pupils to read quickly is at the top of leaders' priorities. The trust has invested significantly in making sure staff are skilled in teaching phonics. Staff benefit from outside expert training. This ensures consistent and high-quality implementation of the programme. Children get off to a flying start in Reception. Leaders track pupils' progress through each stage. Pupils read the right books to practise the sounds they know. Currently, there are pupils who require extra reading sessions to catch up. Leaders know they must act fast. The daily 'fast track' tutoring is having an impact on helping these pupils read.

The school's curriculum is ambitious in its design. Leaders know the educational journey from Nursery to Year 6 in each subject. Although the core knowledge is mapped out across year groups, leaders have not fine-tuned sequencing this knowledge into logical steps. It means that in some subjects, teachers are making their own choices for when and how pupils learn new content. Consequently, pupils

can learn things in the wrong order. This then impacts upon pupils' understanding and readiness for something new.

Teachers are developing their knowledge and skills through ongoing professional development. Leaders are utilising the trust's training programme to support teachers in knowing how best pupils learn. Teachers use regular opportunities to get pupils to recall previous learning quickly. This supports pupils' remembering of the curriculum. Teachers explain concepts clearly, using helpful models where needed.

There are, however, some aspects where leaders have not ensured that teachers have the right expertise. Sometimes, teachers set activities which miss the mark in enabling pupils' successful learning. This happens when teachers lack clarity of the knowledge pupils must grasp. They can mistakenly think that pupils learn in a certain way.

Pupils' vocabulary and language are promoted well. In early years, adults exploit excellent opportunities to teach and build children's vocabulary through direct teaching and children's play. As well as reading aloud, adults sing and recite nursery rhymes to develop children's language. Older pupils read a wide range of books to enhance their knowledge and acquire new words.

Leaders identify pupils with SEND quickly. These pupils are known and their needs are well understood. Leaders ensure that pupils get the right help early. Teachers are becoming more skilled in breaking down content into smaller steps where needed. Pupils with SEND complete the same work as their peers but, occasionally, adults do not promote enough independence when pupils are learning.

Pupils work hard and know not to disturb others. Teachers consistently reinforce the school's core values. Pupils advocate tolerance and acceptance. They know not to judge somebody based on their race, faith or family background.

Trustees rigorously hold leaders to account. They expect leaders to provide a high-quality education to pupils. School governors undertake their delegated responsibilities conscientiously. Meetings are purposeful in checking the impact of leaders' actions on the education of their pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are never complacent in how they keep pupils safe from harm. Excellent communication between adults ensures that leaders have the knowledge they need to take prompt action. Regular training and ongoing discussions keep everyone abreast of any worrying signs to look out for. The 'it can happen here' message permeates through all that staff do. Leaders' records are precise and document all conversations. Every week leaders meet to review actions. They are methodical in their approach.

Pupils are well informed about online safety risks, for example when using mobile phones. They know how to protect their personal information.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not precisely identified all the component knowledge. This means that pupils can learn content out of sequence. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects outline exactly what knowledge must be taught where and when across all year groups.
- Leaders' actions for improving teachers' subject and pedagogical knowledge require further embedding. Sometimes, teachers are not clear enough about setting appropriate tasks which will help pupils remember content securely. Leaders need to continue to support teachers' implementation of the curriculum so that pupils' work closely matches the ambitious curricular goals.

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.

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	144697
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10238342
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lynne O'Reilly
Headteacher	Gavin Oulton
Website	www.merstham.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as part of the GLF Schools multi-academy trust in 2018. When its predecessor school, with the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2016, it was judged to be good.
- Merstham admits children from two-years-old upwards. Currently, there are no two-year-olds on roll.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met trust leaders, including the chief executive. The lead

inspector met trust leaders, including the chief executive, the chair of the board of trustees, and two governors of the School Standards Board (SSB).

- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. To do this, they met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- Pupils across the school were observed reading to a familiar adult by the lead inspector.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to examine records and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding documentation. A team inspector reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of adults.
- Inspectors talked to pupils from different year groups about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff, pupils and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included leaders' self-evaluation and school development priorities, policies, curriculum documents, published information about pupils' performance, pupil premium strategy and catch-up funding, and minutes of both the board of trustees and the SSB.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Shaughnessy

Ofsted Inspector

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