

Inspection of a good school: Merebrook Infant School

Dulverton Drive, Furzton, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK4 1EZ

Inspection date: 12 October 2022

Outcome

Merebrook Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Merebrook Infant School because they enjoy learning and playing together. One of the school's values, 'community,' is at the heart of daily life. One pupil summed this up by saying, 'At this school we're all just one big team.'

Pupils rightly feel proud that their school is a place where everyone is included and feels welcome. Pupils are encouraged to celebrate the diversity in their local area, for example by sharing knowledge of different languages or recognising religious festivals from different faiths.

Pupils behave very well. Strong routines are established right from the early years, and pupils understand exactly what adults in school expect of them. Pupils are friendly and polite to each other as well as adults. Incidences of bullying are extremely rare and are resolved quickly by leaders if they do happen.

Parents and carers are very happy with the school. They particularly appreciate its caring ethos and the focus on encouraging each child to work hard. Reflecting the views of many, one parent said, 'I could not have put my daughter in a better school. They have supported her well and given her such confidence and praise.'

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

Leaders are rightly proud of the calm and purposeful learning environment they have created. Behaviour is routinely excellent. Pupils engage enthusiastically with their lessons and are keen to share what they know with others. Leaders have set out clear and effective procedures in relation to behaviour, and staff follow these very consistently. Pupils understand that their teachers will praise or reward them when they demonstrate the school's values 'community, pride, aspire'. They particularly enjoy opportunities to celebrate their successes when they come together for assemblies. They also understand that they will be reminded when they do not make the right choices, and they respond well to this.

Leaders' high expectations of what pupils can achieve are most evident in the teaching of reading and mathematics. Pupils learn very well in these subjects. This is because leaders have made sure that what pupils learn has been planned in precise detail. Teachers regularly check for gaps in pupils' knowledge. If pupils fall behind, then effective support is put in place quickly to help them catch up. Teachers and teaching assistants have been trained well and have expert subject knowledge in these areas. They deliver the curriculum with confidence and adapt it skilfully to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders' work on the curriculum is not as developed in foundation subjects as it is in reading and mathematics. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning in subjects such as art and history, but the knowledge they develop is not as deep or secure. Leaders recognise that they are still in the process of defining precisely what they want pupils to know in some of the foundation subjects.

Leaders are committed to developing pupils personally as well as academically. As part of their lessons in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and how to look after their mental health. They benefit from opportunities in the curriculum and in assemblies to learn about different cultures and the importance of equality. Although the number of clubs is quite limited, pupils really enjoy those that are available, particularly the opportunity to learn parkour skills from a visiting 'ninja warrior'. Uptake of the existing clubs is high and leaders are in the process of building on their popularity by expanding what they offer.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of their school and a clear vision for its future. They continuously seek improvement and this is having a positive impact on the lives of their pupils. High-quality professional development and working in partnership with other local schools have enabled them to drive improvement quickly yet sustainably. Staff appreciate the fact that leaders are approachable and consult them on important decisions.

Despite recent improvements to the way they operate, governors do not always ensure that the most important areas are prioritised in their work. Some governors lack the relevant expertise to hold leaders to account effectively. They do not understand enough about the barriers to the school improving further and this limits their impact.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is everybody's priority. They train staff effectively and provide regular updates as necessary. Staff understand how to report concerns and they do so reliably. Leaders respond quickly when children or families need help. Where necessary they seek advice and support from external agencies. They ensure that necessary pre-employment checks are carried out on new staff. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe as part of their PSHE lessons. Although governors seek assurances about safeguarding, they do not have a deep understanding of this aspect of the school's work, including how it relates to statutory guidance.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum for some foundation subjects is less well developed than in core subjects. Pupils' knowledge in these subjects is not as deep or secure. Leaders should decide more precisely what they want pupils to know in each subject and ensure that teachers know how to check what pupils have and have not learned from the curriculum.
- Governors lack the detailed knowledge that they need to challenge and support leaders effectively. Meetings held by the governing body are not sufficiently focused on those areas which should be a priority for development, including the further development of the curriculum. Governors need to ensure that they are sufficiently knowledgeable about their roles and the areas of the school for which they are responsible. This will support them in ensuring their contribution to the school has a greater impact on pupils' experiences and outcomes.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

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	131670
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10227866
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Nick Sharp
Headteacher	Hayley White (executive headteacher) Tracy Hurwood (head of school)
Website	www.merebrookschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 and 20 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since its last inspection, the school has formed a federation with the local junior school, Emerson Valley. There is one executive headteacher across both schools and a head of school in each.
- There is one governing body across both federation schools.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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 leaders about their areas of responsibility, including the executive headteacher and head of school. The lead inspector met with representatives of the school's governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a

sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors spoke to senior leaders and looked at curriculum subjects in some other subjects, including geography and history.
- Inspectors judged the effectiveness of safeguarding by meeting with leaders, looking at records and talking with staff, governors and pupils about this aspect of the school's work.

Inspection team

Chris Ellison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mary Ellen McCarthy

Ofsted Inspector

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