

Inspection of Mersea Island School

Barfield Road, West Mersea, Colchester, Essex CO5 8QX

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. The school's values of 'community, aspiration, respect and enjoyment' are woven through the heart of school life. Pupils behave well and take pride in their work. They look after and support each other. Pupils who are new to the school are warmly welcomed.

Staff have high expectations of pupils. Pupils are motivated to meet these expectations. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are encouraged and supported by staff to do well in their lessons. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils live up to the school's vision that 'every child has the capacity to be successful.'

Bullying is very rare. Pupils are confident that adults will listen to any concerns that they have. They value the rewards system and say that it is fair. Pupils feel safe in school. Pupils know there are adults they can talk to if they have any worries. Their teachers look after them well.

Pupils enjoy being librarians, ship's captains, learning ambassadors and eco-warriors. They are proud of their island school. Pupils love taking part in beach school activities. They talk with enthusiasm about their roles as assembly leaders and helping with the stationery shop.

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

Leaders have developed an engaging curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge over time. The curriculum makes imaginative use of the school's unique island setting. Leaders focus on providing an ambitious curriculum right from the start. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They ask pupils questions and listen carefully to their responses. This helps teachers to check that pupils are remembering what they have been taught.

The curriculum has been designed to give children in Nursery and Reception a secure foundation across all areas of learning. This prepares them well for key stage 1 and beyond. In some subjects, curriculum plans are new. Leaders have made some changes recently to improve pupils' learning. Leaders have added more detail to some curriculum plans and tailored them more closely to pupils' interests. It is too early to see the full impact of this work, but there are signs that pupils are learning and remembering more.

The reading curriculum is a strength of the school. Staff have expert knowledge to teach reading. Children in early years start learning how to read straight away. Teachers use assessment well. They make sure the books that pupils read are well matched to the letters and sounds they know. This helps pupils become confident

and fluent readers. Where pupils need extra support if they struggle with reading, this is provided quickly, and pupils' fluency improves. Teachers make sure the books chosen to read to classes are interesting and connect well to the curriculum. Proud and helpful pupil librarians run the library. Pupils love reading. One pupil, typical of many, said, 'Reading helps me travel in my imagination.'

Children in the early years settle quickly and develop positive attitudes to learning. Adults teach language and communication skills well. Teachers plan learning activities that match children's needs. Children enjoy talking about their learning, such as explaining how plants need soil, water and sunshine to grow. Children learn happily together.

There are clear systems for identifying pupils with SEND. Leaders ensure that effective support is put in place. Staff know pupils' needs well. Pupils with SEND have support plans that link closely to their needs. Teachers make appropriate adaptations to help pupils with SEND learn well.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. On the playground, pupils play happily together. Staff have clear, high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils know what these expectations are. Pupils listen and concentrate well.

The curriculum supports pupils' social and emotional development well. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They learn about differences and diversity. Pupils have a strong sense of their local island community. Pupils learn about British values and institutions, including democracy and the monarchy. Leaders have started to introduce even more opportunities for pupils to learn about people from different backgrounds and cultures.

Pupils participate in sporting competitions and events. Swimming is given a high priority because the school is beside the sea. There is a wide range of after-school clubs, which helps pupils to develop their talents and interests.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate leaders' consideration for their workload and well-being. Governors know the school well. They provide appropriate support and challenge for leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff have the knowledge to identify when pupils are at risk of harm. Staff have been well trained to identify any concerns and to report them immediately. Rigorous systems are in place to provide the necessary timely support for pupils who need it.

Leaders are persistent in ensuring external agencies support families and pupils when required. They are not afraid to challenge if this support is not provided.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Governors are effective in checking that systems are fully in place.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have introduced some recent changes to the curriculum, including adding more detail to subject plans and tailoring learning more closely to pupils' interests. These have been designed to further improve outcomes for pupils. These improvements are new and not embedded yet. Consequently, there are gaps in some pupils' knowledge in some areas of the curriculum, and some outcomes have been inconsistent. Leaders should continue with their plans to embed these new curriculum plans, and governors should ensure that leaders fully evaluate the impact of this work.

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	115311
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10212370
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs of governing body	Zoe Rogers and Mrs Rebecca Reilly
Headteacher	Tania Wright
Website	www.merseaschool.org
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 July 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is an early morning childcare club and an after-school childcare club, run by school staff.
- There is a school nursery providing care and education for young children between the ages of two and five years.
- The school does not make use of 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 members of the school’s leadership team.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, art and design, and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with the subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at pupils’ work.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and with learning support staff.
- Inspectors met with six members of the governing body, including the two co-chairs.
- Inspectors spoke on the telephone to the local authority’s school effectiveness partner.
- Inspectors looked at the single central record of pre-employment checks. Inspectors spoke to leaders, school staff, governors and pupils to review the school’s records and arrangements for safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors considered the 98 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire for parents, including 71 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 41 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Nick Rudman, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Shadbolt	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Ofsted Inspector

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