

Inspection of Merrow C of E Controlled Infant School

Kingfisher Drive, Merrow, Guildford, Surrey GU4 7EA

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

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	Outstanding

The school was last inspected under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 12 years ago and was judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2022, the school was exempt by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under Section 5 of the act. The school received a geography subject monitoring inspection under section 8 of the Act on 14 January 2020. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their learning at this nurturing and inclusive school. Warm, respectful relationships mean that pupils feel safe and quickly develop their confidence. They describe their school as a kind place. The school's values of 'perseverance, respect, kindness and integrity' are very well understood by pupils and form the backbone of life here.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Clear, consistent routines help pupils to live up to these expectations. Pupils are polite and considerate towards their teachers and each other.

The school gives pupils opportunities to understand different faiths and ways of life. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) enjoy sharing their experiences and culture. Pupils are respectful of difference and welcome everyone.

The school provides a broad curriculum, with increasing proportions of pupils now achieving well. In subjects such as design technology, pupils enjoy learning precise techniques to design and make Christmas cards with intricate moving parts. They are rightly proud of their high-quality work.

Parents wholeheartedly endorse the work of the school. One parent, summing up the views of almost all, commented, 'There is a high level of care and joy. Any child can flourish in this school.'

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

The school has put in place a broad and balanced curriculum that focuses well on the needs of pupils who speak EAL and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It is well sequenced, providing ample opportunities for pupils to practise, gain confidence and build on their learning. This starts from early years where children develop strong foundations in numbers, reading and understanding the world around them.

In most subjects, the school has thought carefully about the precise knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to learn and remember. However, in a couple of subjects, the curriculum lacks this degree of precision. The exact knowledge that pupils should be taught has not been identified clearly enough. Here, pupils do not achieve as well as in the strongest subjects.

Published outcomes in 2023 were not strong in mathematics and phonics. However, current pupils achieve well because of the strengthened curriculum and well-trained, knowledgeable staff. Teachers select activities that allow pupils to learn and remember important knowledge. Skilful staff adapt resources for pupils with SEND, ensuring that they can learn as well as their peers. For example, in mathematics, pupils make good use of resources, like counters, to add and subtract numbers.

Teachers regularly check that pupils have understood their learning. They address any misconceptions that pupils may have.

Reading is a priority for the school. From early years, children are taught how to recognise letters and words. They also have many opportunities to practise their writing. The school's phonics programme is working well. Staff quickly spot any pupil who is struggling to read and give them extra help. Books are well matched to pupils' ability. Pupils read widely and regularly. In recent years, a high proportion of pupils who speak EAL have joined the school part-way through their education. The school is adept at helping these pupils to understand both the sounds and the meaning of words. This quickly builds their fluency in English.

Pupils are proud of their school. They have positive attitudes to learning and focus well. Consequently, learning is rarely interrupted. Children in early years readily share and cooperate well in activities. Staff gently encourage children to keep going if a task is challenging. Children develop their independence and social skills well.

Pupils' wider development is well-considered. They enjoy trips, for example, to the local farm. This helps bring their science learning to life. Pupils enthusiastically attend several extra-curricular clubs such as dance and sports. The curriculum teaches pupils about growing up safely and relationships. They have a strong understanding of how to stay healthy, such as eating well and being active. Pupils make great use of the many outdoor activities such as the trim trail and running track. However, there are currently limited opportunities for pupils to make a meaningful contribution to school life, to develop their character or to show leadership skills.

The school is committed to providing high-quality pastoral care for pupils and their families. Parents recognise that school staff go above and beyond to support their children. Staff also value the respect and care they receive. They benefit from the increasingly high-quality training provided by the school. Governors have a broadly accurate understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. They make sure that pupils' welfare and safety are always a high priority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the curriculum is not designed as precisely as in the strongest. This means that pupils do not always achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that the curriculum across all subjects sets out the precise knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should be taught.

- The school knows that too few pupils currently have meaningful opportunities to develop their character and citizenship. This means that, for the majority of pupils, the opportunity to make an active and positive contribution to school life is limited. The school should further enrich pupils' broader personal and character development.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	125160
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10287947
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Wright
Headteacher	Louisa Dormer
Website	www.merrow.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England voluntary controlled school, within the Diocese of Guildford.
- The school's last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) was in April 2016.
- The school federated with the nearby junior school in 2022. The headteacher took up post in the infant school in 2022 and oversees both the infant and the junior school. Some other leaders are based in junior school but also oversee aspects in this school.
- The school's governing body also oversees the junior school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school runs its own pre-school and after-school club, based at the junior school.

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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a range of meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative from the Diocese of Guildford and a representative from Surrey local authority.
- The lead inspector met with seven members of the local governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, design technology and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector heard pupils read aloud to a known adult. Inspectors also looked more broadly at pupils' work in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils, and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive safeguarding culture that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour and the school's wider curriculum.
- The inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and staff about their experience in the school.
- The inspectors considered the responses and free-text responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Maria Roberts, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Bill James

Ofsted Inspector

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