

Inspection of Merrydale Infant School

Claydon Road, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 0PL

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 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	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Merrydale Infant School is a welcoming and friendly school. Pupils are really happy to be part of this school. One pupil, echoing the views of many, said, 'I love coming to school. I miss it when I am not here.' Pupils say that they feel safe, and that staff care for them well.

Pupils learn to act kindly towards others. Their manners are beautiful. Pupils act sensibly in classrooms and along corridors, even on a wet and windy day at school. They politely hold doors open for each other. Staff are great role models. They show care for each and every pupil. This is most definitely 'one school with many strengths'.

The school is ambitious for all pupils to achieve their very best. Pupils live up to these expectations. In lessons, pupils try their best and work hard. They strive to earn rewards, including the chance to be the 'star of the week'.

Many pupils profit from the range of extra-curricular clubs that the school provides. Particular favourites are gardening and cooking clubs. Pupils are very proud to be school councillors. Younger children develop their understanding of responsibility through looking after Mary and Dale, the school guinea pigs.

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

The school has worked with determination to make rigorous improvements to the curriculum. The coherent curriculum begins in the early years. The school has thought carefully about the order in which knowledge and skills are taught. The curriculum provides pupils with activities and information that entuses them to learn. The school ensures that pupils' learning activities are full of talk and the learning of new words.

In some subjects, the curriculum is very new. Some pupils have gaps in their learning. This is because they have not been given sufficient time to revisit their previous learning. Where the curriculum is new, it is too soon to see the full impact on pupils knowing and remembering more in some subjects.

Pupils begin to learn to read as soon as they start the Reception Year. Many of the foundations to prepare children for reading have already been laid in the Nursery. Reading is a high priority in the school. Children in the early years love practising their phonics. Everyone works together well to develop pupils' accuracy and fluency. Pupils learn the sounds that letters make in a well-sequenced way. Pupils who need further support access extra interventions to help them keep up.

Children get off to a flying start in the early years. Staff help children in the Nursery and Reception classes to understand the school's routines and expectations. They build warm, supportive relationships with children, who adapt quickly to these routines. Children learn to take turns and share. They are curious, happy, confident

learners. In the early years, a strong focus on communication and language prepares children well for Year 1.

Inclusivity, respect and acceptance of difference are at the heart of this school. The school welcomes all children. The school has quickly identified how to best support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff make sure that these pupils get what they need to learn well.

Pupils behave well in class and during social times. They are respectful and kind to each other. In lessons, pupils are engaged in their learning and can learn without distraction. The school has worked tirelessly to improve pupils' attendance. However, too many pupils are regularly absent from school for lengthy periods of time. These pupils are missing out on vital learning and are not achieving as well as they could.

The school provides pupils with a well-considered programme of opportunities and activities to enrich their wider development. For example, pupils enjoy visits to the theatre and love celebrating different festivals, such as Diwali. Pupils learn important knowledge about looking after themselves and staying safe. The pastoral support is a real strength of the school. Parents and carers are just as important as the pupils here. The school goes over and above to ensure pupils and their families receive support when needed.

Leaders are determined to improve the school further. They actively work with external professionals, such as the local authority. This is having a positive impact and improvements have taken place rapidly. Governors are regular visitors to the school. They have a clear understanding of where the school is on its journey and the next steps it needs to take.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They value the consideration given to their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school does not ensure that pupils are given sufficient opportunities to revisit and practise the key knowledge that they have been taught previously. This means that they sometimes start to learn new concepts when their previous knowledge is not secure. The school should ensure that pupils are not moved on in their learning too quickly, so that they build on their prior knowledge and know and remember more in these subjects.
- Recent changes to the curriculum development for some subjects is still new. It is too soon to see the full impact on pupils knowing and remembering more in these

subjects. The school should continue to implement their ambitious curriculums in their entirety and monitor the impact of the curriculums to improve pupils' knowledge over time.

- Despite the school's best efforts so far, too many pupils are regularly absent for long periods of time. This means that these pupils are missing out on vital learning and not achieving as well as they could. The school should continue to work with families to improve attendance and ensure that parents understand the importance of regular attendance in order for pupils to maximise their potential.

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 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	120023
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10288311
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	332
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elizabeth Surtees
Headteacher	Mark Tipple-Johnson
Website	www.merrydale-inf.leicester.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 – 28 September 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and a range of staff.
- The lead inspector met with the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, music and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors also looked at the curriculum and pupils' books in geography, science, writing and design and technology.
- 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 culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime. The inspectors spoke with pupils about their views of the school and their learning, behaviour and safety.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector met with groups of staff and pupils and considered responses to Ofsted's staff surveys.

Inspection team

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