

Inspection of a good school: Merton Infant School

Romsey Close, Popley Way, Popley, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 9HB

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 March 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school encourages its pupils to 'aim high, achieve together'. Pupils are extremely happy, and know they will be well cared for and learn useful knowledge and skills each day. The school's values underpin all of its work. The values help to motivate pupils to make the very most of opportunities and be determined to never give up.

Pupils learn extremely well and there is a buzz during lessons. The school is exceptionally inclusive. Staff give disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language excellent opportunities and support so that they succeed. Staff consider the specific academic, pastoral and wider experiences very carefully that these pupils need to achieve highly.

The school is exceptionally calm. Staff expect pupils to behave extremely well. Pupils feel honoured to take on leadership roles such as school councillors or young interpreters. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and speak to others confidently. Pupils concentrate hard on the tasks which teachers have set them. Pupils show high levels of respect for their learning and in how they treat one another. The dinner hall is calm, while playgrounds are happy, social and active places. This positivity enables pupils to build strong, enduring friendships.

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

Pupils achieve highly, which is reflected in their outcomes at the end of key stage 1. The school provides pupils with a high-quality education and all-round development opportunities. The curriculum maps out the precise key knowledge, skills and vocabulary all pupils need to learn and remember. Staff skilfully identify the individual needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils receive high levels

of expert support from well-trained staff. This means all pupils can access the same highly ambitious curriculum.

The school prioritises reading. Pupils know and understand the school's mantra that 'reading is the most important skill'. The strong emphasis on developing pupils' language and reading begins in Reception and continues throughout key stage 1. Teachers select interesting books that support pupils' learning within the different projects. For example, Year 2 pupils are engrossed in the book 'Grandpa's Island' as part of their study about the Titanic. The successful teaching of phonics underpins this. Staff have meticulous knowledge of any gaps that pupils might have in phonics. The support provided to pupils to fill these gaps is highly effective. This means all pupils' reading improves considerably and rapidly, regardless of their starting points.

Staff have strong subject knowledge across the curriculum. They know exactly what to teach and when this should happen. Pupils make links to their learning across different subjects such as English, mathematics, history and art. This helps pupils to embed their subject-specific understanding within a broader context. Staff check how well pupils have remembered what they have learned effectively. Staff provide rapid support when pupils struggle, both in lessons and as soon as possible afterwards. This helps prevent any gaps in pupils' learning getting bigger.

Pupils behave extremely well. This starts in the Reception Year, where pupils settle into the high expectations very quickly. Pupils of all ages work hard, take turns and show high levels of manners and independence. They understand why it is important for everyone to have their say. Pupils are confident that adults will immediately help them if they are worried. Pupils are also eager to support one another and help if someone needs it. Some pupils need extra support to behave. Staff implement carefully considered strategies to help these pupils make their time in school as successful as possible.

Pupils flourish due to the rich opportunities that the school provides. Almost all pupils in key stage 1 have attended at least one club this year. The variety of options pupils can choose from is considerable and pupils get a say in what clubs they would like. This helps them to develop and pursue their talents and interests. The school's desire to support pupils who speak English as an additional language is impressive. This all creates a conducive and happy atmosphere through the school, where there is no sense of discrimination or bullying.

Staff and governors have highly effective working relationships with each other. This teamwork helps generate even better provision. They do this to help all pupils learn and flourish. Parents recognise this commitment to their children, with one saying: 'Merton Infant School is fantastic. My child is happy, safe and thriving. The staff are fabulous and I couldn't give them better praise.' This reflects the views of the vast majority of parents.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2014.

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	116004
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10296208
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	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gaye Dove
Headteacher	Larissa James
Website	www.mertoninfants.com
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school wraparound care for pupils at the school and the linked junior school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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.
- The inspector also looked at additional curriculum plans for religious education and art and design.

- The inspector met with the headteacher and other leaders within the school. The inspector also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings and behaviour incident logs.
- The inspector considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View.
- The views of staff were gathered through interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection, as well as the survey.
- The inspector gathered pupils' views throughout the inspection, including through discussions, during classroom visits and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Chris Parker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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