Inspection of a good school: Merton Abbey Primary School

High Path, Merton, London, SW19 2JY

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 July 2024

Outcome

Merton Abbey Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils in this school feel happy and secure, as the school fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment. Leaders, staff, parents and carers, and pupils all agree that the school is a close-knit and supportive community. Pupils are well looked after and the school knows them well. They are confident to seek out support from any adult if they have any concerns.

The school wants its pupils to 'work hard and to care for each other'. Pupils respond positively to this, showing perseverance in their learning. They achieve well across subjects, and particularly in phonics and mathematics.

Pupils are respectful. They listen to adults and follow instructions promptly. They behave well, both in and out of lessons. Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils. They expect pupils to conduct themselves consistently well. On the rare occasions when pupils are reminded about their behaviour, they listen to adults and quickly follow the school's expectations.

Pupils enjoy the many opportunities that they have to support their creativity. For example, they work with specialist music tutors to take part in musical events such as forming a Blues ensemble. They also perform in concert venues like the Royal Albert Hall. Pupils enjoy working with theatre groups, drama, and dance specialists to enhance their performance skills. They take pride in representing their school in various sports events.

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

Leaders have carefully designed a clear and well-sequenced curriculum. New concepts build on prior learning. In mathematics, for example, children in early years learn to recognise small groups of objects without counting. This prepares them for further number work, including addition and subtraction. Year on year, pupils' knowledge grows well. By the time pupils get to Year 6, for example, they can solve complex mathematical problems involving decimals and percentages.

The curriculum is delivered well. Pupils are supported with plenty of examples to help them to learn new concepts. They are given many opportunities to practise, consolidate and enrich their learning. In religious education, for example, pupils' learning is enhanced by workshops led by the local church. Another example is in French, where teaching enables pupils to confidently use their knowledge to form accurate and increasingly complex sentences. However, sometimes the curriculum does not enable pupils to develop their understanding of subject-specific vocabulary as accurately as it should. Over time, this results in the depth and detail of pupils' knowledge being less secure.

The school uses assessment effectively to promptly identify pupils' misconceptions. This means that gaps in pupils' learning are typically addressed before they can worsen. The school uses a range of strategies to ensure that pupils attend regularly and do not miss out on all the learning on offer. Much of the school's work is effective. However, for some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, persistent absence rates remain high. The school is currently working on ways to help these pupils attend regularly and catch up on learning that they may have missed.

The school serves a larger than average number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders and staff promptly identify these pupils' needs. They ensure that these pupils receive effective adaptations to enable to learn the curriculum. Pupils with SEND actively engage in learning activities and achieve well.

The school places great importance on teaching pupils to read. Staff have been thoroughly trained to deliver the phonics curriculum well. Pupils benefit from effective strategies that help them to learn and remember their letter sounds. They read books that contain the sounds that they already know, reinforcing their learning. Pupils who lag behind in their phonics learning receive support promptly and they quickly catch up.

The school fosters a genuine love of reading and books. It does this through regular library visits, storytelling sessions and by having teachers read to pupils regularly. These efforts create an enriching environment where pupils can develop a real interest in and enthusiasm for reading.

Pupils take part confidently in discussions in lessons. They collaborate well with one another. Pupils show a keen interest in their studies and respect classroom rules. Their attitudes and conduct contribute to a positive learning atmosphere. Disruptions to learning are rare.

The school supports pupils in understanding their local community and beyond. For example, pupils regularly visit a local care home for older people, where they interact with residents, reading books and performing songs for them. Pupils gain insights into different geographical locations. For example, they explore coastal areas of England through residential visits to the Isle of Wight. Additionally, older pupils are supported to develop an understanding of life in the countryside by spending a week on a farm in Gloucestershire.

Staff appreciate that leaders are approachable and the school gives them time to carry out any additional responsibilities expected of them. Processes and approaches in school have been streamlined to ensure that workload remains manageable. Staff are proud to work in this school. They value the support that they receive from leaders and their colleagues.

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 instances, the curriculum does not enable pupils to obtain a secure understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. When this happens, pupils develop gaps in their understanding which limits them from gaining deep knowledge in a subject. The school should enhance opportunities for pupils to develop and grasp essential vocabulary in a subject so that they know and remember more over time.
- In some cases, the school's work to promote regular attendance has not had the positive impact it expects. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent remains high. This impacts on how fully pupils are able to develop and embed deeper knowledge. The school should continue to implement and refine strategies to support regular attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, to ensure that these pupils can benefit from the education the school offers and, in turn, achieve their full potential over time.

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 the school to be good in May 2019.

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 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	102638
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10345828
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mamie Barden and Frances Cresswell (Co-chair of governors)
Headteacher	Michael Bradley
Website	www.mertonabbey.merton.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, French, and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Other subjects were considered as part of this inspection.
- 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 also considered the views of parents through their responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Edison David, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024