



Mere Green Combined School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103389
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276908
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006
Reporting inspector Neil Gillespie AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mere Green Road
School category	Community		Sutton Coldfield
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		West Midlands B75 5BL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 3081384
Number on roll	233	Fax number	0121 3232644
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Joanne Raybould

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school with a nursery. The school has far more pupils with a statement of special educational need than average. Many of these attend the school's speech and language resource base. Few pupils come from minority ethnic heritages or do not speak English as their first language. There is high mobility of pupils as families often move in and out of the area. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mere Green is a good and improving school that is increasingly making sure that all pupils achieve as well as possible. School self-evaluation is mostly accurate, although current achievement and overall effectiveness were underestimated because they were assessed before managers had firm evidence that standards had improved. Standards have risen sharply since last year and are now broadly average because of improved teaching and learning. Achievement is good because pupils reach challenging individual targets. However, in most subjects, pupils do not know how well they are doing because teachers do not communicate in sufficient detail what levels pupils are working at or what they need to do to make further progress. Literacy is a notable exception, where pupils are progressing very well. Pupils behave exceptionally well and they feel happy in this safe and healthy environment as they receive good care, guidance and support. Teaching is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well because of the good teaching and learning throughout the school and within the school's speech and language resource base and the effective support they receive in lessons. The curriculum is good and is enriched by the good range of information and communication technology (ICT) programmes and out-of-school activities.

The quality of education in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) is good. Although most children meet or surpass their individual learning goals, the high number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities means that most do not reach the goals expected of children of this age.

The new leadership team is strong. It has ensured that standards have improved since the national test results in 2005 through rigorous checking of the quality of teaching. The focus on strengths and areas for improvement is good. Prospects for continuing improvement are good, as is the value for money provided by the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Track pupils' progress more effectively so that both staff and pupils have a clearer understanding of how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and pupils achieve well. In the 2005 national tests, boys underachieved significantly but the school has put in place an effective programme to raise achievement, especially in English and science. Standards have risen sharply this academic year from the school's well-below-average results in 2005. This is the result of the school's recent focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Children enter the Nursery with broadly average skills and experiences but this profile changes quite considerably as they move into Reception. At this stage, the school integrates many children who have significant learning difficulties and disabilities, and

overall attainment is much lower. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and the majority reach the goals for learning expected of pupils of this age.

Progress in Years 1 and 2 has improved considerably this year. Standards remain below average as over a third of pupils have learning difficulties, but progress is good. Pupils work enthusiastically and they try very hard to reach their individual targets, which are challenging. Most of them do this successfully. Standards in Years 3 to 6 are currently close to the average, showing a considerable improvement since last year's test results. Most pupils make good progress, including the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils from minority ethnic heritages achieve well and reach similar standards to other pupils. Boys and pupils who have joined the school late now make the progress expected of them because of thorough tracking and better quality teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Children in the Nursery and Reception enjoy learning and work happily and safely together, developing their self-esteem and confidence well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they are strongly aware of their responsibilities to each other and to the community. Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in the improving attendance, which is currently above average. Pupils behave excellently, and are respectful and considerate.

Pupils are healthy because the school promotes healthy lifestyles effectively. Most pupils pick the nutritious options at lunchtime and the free fruit at break, despite the availability of some less healthy choices. The school council is an effective forum where pupils feel they can express their views on health and other issues and make a positive contribution. Pupils take pleasure in and benefit from participating in the many team games, dance groups and two hours of physical education each week. Pupils are calm, orderly and adopt excellent safe practices because of the high priority the school gives to ensuring their safety. Contribution to the community is good because pupils enjoy performing and singing in local events and fundraising. They learn sign language as a life skill and make good use of it in school to communicate with children who have speaking difficulties. Pupils are prepared well for their future life and work outside school because they have good skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are at the heart of recent improvements and are good. This is particularly so in literacy lessons, where pupils are strongly aware of their progress and what they need to do to improve.

Teaching is good in the Nursery and Reception, so that children learn in an exciting environment. They have a variety of experiences, which teachers plan well to ensure they build skills and knowledge steadily. Across the school, teaching is thorough, constructive and engaging. Teachers have high expectations of the standards pupils are capable of attaining and provide good opportunities for pupils to work as a class, in groups and on their own. Teachers use their good knowledge of individuals to provide good learning that identifies and fulfils the needs of all pupils. Pupils have fun in their learning and enjoy their work. Their good attitudes and behaviour result in their good achievement.

Despite improving procedures for assessing and marking pupils' work, pupils are not fully aware of how well they are achieving, nor do they have a clear idea of what more they need to do to improve in areas other than literacy. This is an area for further development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a rich and varied curriculum. Extra lessons for pupils with English as an additional language and for those with speech and language difficulties enable them to achieve well. Children in the Nursery and Reception enjoy a stimulating programme of activities focusing well on all areas of learning, especially their language and personal, social and emotional development. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities work on tailor-made programmes which meet their individual needs well. However, planning is not always precise enough in the identification of the skills and knowledge to be learned, and this reduces their achievement at times.

Through its membership of a primary school cluster group, the school benefits enormously from sharing ideas and resources and good participation in community projects. Information and communication technology flourishes in the school and pupils use these resources well. Pupils are confident when they perform in public because they have good opportunities to do this in assemblies and celebration days. In one assembly, a Year 4 class demonstrated their excellent knowledge of how electricity works through the speech and drama performance they gave to an audience of very enthusiastic parents.

The school offers a wide range of popular out-of-school activities. Pupils take part in residential trips where they develop good relationships and learn to become independent and responsible individuals.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for well and there are good procedures for health and safety. The mission statement of Mere Green School that 'doing your best, showing consideration and respect for others and taking part are important' is evident in all aspects of its work. The behaviour policy works effectively to promote exemplary conduct. Attendance is improving well because staff work successfully to encourage pupils to come to school

regularly. All staff know the pupils well and their social development is promoted sensitively.

Vulnerable pupils and those who have learning difficulties and disabilities are identified quickly and supported carefully, so that they gain in confidence and know they are safe. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. Teachers use assessment information well to set challenging targets, but pupils are not always aware of the level they are working at or what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good because the relatively new headteacher gives strong leadership and provides a clear sense of direction to the work of the school. Progress since the last inspection has been slow and standards have not been as high as they should. More recently, with the reorganisation and development of the leadership team, managers now share the headteacher's vision and sense of direction. This has led to an increased pace of development and a positive impact on pupils' progress, leading to improved standards within their current work. Senior teachers are effective and support the headteacher well. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and, as a result, are aware that academic guidance to pupils needs improving further, although they have yet to formulate this plan in detail.

Governors are knowledgeable, supportive and involved, and undertake their responsibilities well. The school's improvement plan and self-evaluation procedures clearly identify the areas for development such as writing and problem solving where recent progress has been good. These, combined with the modified school management structure, mean that the school now has the good capacity to ensure continued improvement.

Day-to-day management is effective, resources are deployed efficiently, and the school provides good value for money. The school listens to and acts upon the views of pupils, parents and members of the community well. Parents support the school enthusiastically, and one wrote to the inspection team, 'My son could not be happier. The staff are wonderful.'

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We liked talking to you very much. What you said to us was important and helped us to get a clear picture of what goes on in your school. We particularly liked these things:

Your headteacher and her staff have made sure that your school is a very safe and happy place. You showed us this by the way you played together and talked to each other.

You work hard in lessons and your behaviour is excellent.

Your ability to use sign language is impressive.

You respond well to good teaching by trying your best to reach your individual targets. As a result, you have made good progress recently.

Those of you who have learning difficulties benefit enormously from good teaching in the speech and language resource base.

You use computers well to help you with your learning.

You are very confident when you perform in front of an audience. We particularly liked the Year 4 assembly that was positively 'electric.'

You said how much you enjoyed the sport and other activities that the school puts on for you.

We have asked the school to improve one area of its work:

Teachers need to track your progress better so that both you and your teachers understand more clearly how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve.

Your headteacher and her staff work hard to provide a good education for you. Now you need to continue working hard to achieve your ambitions. We wish you good luck!