



# Mersham Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118377  
**LEA** Kent  
**Inspection number** 280304  
**Inspection dates** 6 December 2005 to 7 December 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Kevin Hodge RISP

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Church Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Mersham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Ashford, Kent TN25 6NU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01233 720449
<b>Number on roll</b>	185	<b>Fax number</b>	01233 720190
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Carol Wilson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 October 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mark Brooks

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 6 December 2005 - 7 December 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 280304
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Mersham is a smaller-than-average school situated in a small village near Ashford. Nearly three quarters of its pupils come from outside of the immediate community and levels of mobility are slightly higher than average. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are white British and all have English as their home language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is below the national average, although the proportion with a statement is higher than average, as the school readily admits pupils with severe learning difficulties. A temporary teacher is covering a long- term absence in the reception class.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school's effectiveness is satisfactory. The inspection evidence does not support the school's own more positive judgement, but there are good features to its work. Standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The pupils' behaviour, their personal development and levels of care are strengths of the school.

Pupils reach average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. In 2005, the results were better than in the previous year, particularly in mathematics and despite some pupils joining the school just prior to the tests. The provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage (reception) is satisfactory. The majority of pupils in reception achieve satisfactorily and reach the levels set for them, although some more able children are capable of making faster progress. In the remainder of the school, pupils' progress sometimes varies as they get older, although the majority of them make satisfactory progress.

Teaching is satisfactory and has good features. Teachers develop good relationships and pupils enjoy lessons, although some activities are not demanding enough and marking varies in its effectiveness. The curriculum is organised satisfactorily and although some activities do not provide enough challenge, pupils enjoy them. The pupils' social and moral education is promoted particularly well and parents comment very positively upon the care the school provides. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The school reviews its work regularly and analyses its strengths and weaknesses, but is not always rigorous in evaluating the effectiveness of its work. Given that the school is implementing changes and has addressed past issues, the school has the capacity to continue improving. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality of planning and use of assessment in the reception class so pupils make consistently good progress
- develop the rigour and quality of teaching, so activities demand more of pupils and marking helps them to improve their progress
- improve the quality of school self-evaluation so that key areas to address are more accurately identified to promote improvement.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average and most pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils in reception make satisfactory gains in their learning from their average starting points, but some of them do not do as well as they should. By the start of Year 1, most reach the expected goals in all areas of learning. Pupils build well upon this start in Years 1 and 2, so that standards at the end of Year 2 are above average. Work in lessons reflects much of this good progress made in gaining basic skills.

By the time pupils reach Year 6, standards are broadly average, as these pupils had lower levels of attainment when they started in Year 3. Pupils' rate of progress sometimes varies in Years 3 to 6, but they generally make satisfactory gains in their learning. The results in the national tests in 2005 improved from a low point in 2004. They fell short of the challenging targets the school had set itself, partly due to the high proportion of lower-attaining pupils who arrived just before the tests. Progress, although generally satisfactory, does not always build upon or extend the skills gained earlier. Within their daily activities, pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress, and those with severe difficulties make good progress. There is some variation in attainment for small groups of pupils such as the more able, but vulnerable pupils and the small number from minority ethnic groups achieve satisfactorily, in line with most other pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils behave well and the school actively develops their confidence and willingness to take responsibility. Pupils work happily together, both in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes. Combined with the development of secure basic skills, these harmonious relationships help promote their future economic well-being satisfactorily. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and the benefits of healthy eating. They actively play games at lunchtimes, and the school promotes the safety of pupils well.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Activities focus less on encouraging pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness, but pupils are interested and thoughtful when opportunities are provided. Pupils respond positively to the many, good opportunities to develop their understanding of right and wrong and to become responsible members of the school and wider community. Members of the school council feel that the staff and governors listen and respond to their suggestions.

These have included providing games at lunchtime to encourage pupils' level of exercise and making improvements to quiet areas.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there are some good features. The teaching in the reception class develops most children's learning satisfactorily. Due to weaknesses in planning and assessment, the most able pupils do not always make the progress they should.

Throughout the school, teaching helps pupils develop good levels of confidence and to relate easily to others. Teachers use a variety of strategies to help pupils remain

interested in their work, but the pace of teaching does not consistently demand enough of them. For example, some discussions are too long, reducing pace and challenge. The increasing use of audio-visual whiteboards, seen in many activities, helps to enliven teaching. Teaching assistants make an important contribution, especially for pupils who have severe learning or behavioural difficulties.

Day-to-day marking in Years 3 to 6 varies in quality. Few comments indicate to pupils if they have improved in relation to the targets they are set, but marking is regular and supportive. Teachers are conscientious at keeping track of how well most pupils make progress over time. Homework and extra-curricular activities complement work in lessons well.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. The inspection evidence does not support the school's more positive judgement as areas such as planning in the reception class are weaker aspects and developing a more creative curriculum are not completed yet. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that the work covers national guidance.

Pupils have good opportunities to learn about healthy living and keeping safe, and for visits to extend their understanding of the wider community. Good features include opportunities for older pupils to learn French, a residential visit and a varied range of extra-curricular activities.

The school has clear intentions to enhance the creative aspects of the curriculum to broaden pupils' learning. The planning in the reception class is not based firmly enough on regular assessment of what children already know. Some activities do not always challenge the most able in the reception class and in Years 3 to 6, although the planned curriculum successfully meets the needs of the majority of pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is good, and the school succeeds in its aim to provide a 'happy, supportive working environment'. School-based surveys and the pre-inspection questionnaire show a high level of parental and pupil satisfaction, especially how well new pupils are helped to start school. All staff are highly committed to ensuring that all pupils, particularly those with severe learning difficulties, are safe and well looked after. Pupils who are vulnerable, or who are from minority ethnic groups, are also looked after particularly well. The school rules are very clear, and occasional instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with swiftly and successfully. The arrangements for supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory, and a good feature is that pupils are given individual targets in English to improve their work in writing. The school monitors pupils' attainment closely at the end of each school year, although this information is not always used as well as it could be to extend pupils' learning. The school's open and inclusive approach means that staff take good care to include all pupils in activities.

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## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides conscientious support to colleagues. Recent changes to management responsibilities are beginning to positively improve aspects of the school's work. Good improvements have been made in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection.

The school regularly analyses its provision to identify strengths and weaker areas, but is not always sufficiently rigorous in some of its evaluations or in the monitoring of teaching. This is one of the reasons for the differences between the school's views and inspectors' judgements. The school improvement plan is clear and staff actively involved in its formulation, but its priorities for action, which stem from the process of self-evaluation, do not always focus sufficiently on the most significant issues. However, the school quickly addressed obvious weaknesses in last year's test results, for example.

The governors support the school satisfactorily, although they have had greater impact in helping to improve resources, buildings and grounds than in other areas. The school makes satisfactory use of its resources and the finances of the school are managed efficiently. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has the capacity to improve further. Both the governors and staff take into account the views of parents and pupils by quickly addressing concerns raised informally and through regular questionnaires.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	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	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Mersham Primary School Church Road Mersham Ashford TN25 6NU

8 December 2005

Dear Children,

Mrs Johnston and I liked visiting your school. You made us feel very welcome and we enjoyed speaking with you about what you do and like most. Here are some of the things we found out while we were with you.

What we liked most about your school

- you make sound gains in learning basic skills by the time you leave the school
- you like your school, develop confidence and behave very well in class and around the school
- the headteacher, governors and staff help you to feel safe and care for you well
- the children who find learning very hard are helped to make progress
- you understand about the best things to eat and why it's good to take exercise
- you like taking responsibility for things and like the school council helping to make suggestions
- your parents or carers think it's a good school and helps you to learn.

What we have asked the school to do now

- improve the planning for the youngest children and keep a closer eye on how well they do, so they can learn more quickly
- keep helping teachers to improve how they guide your learning, so that they can help you work hard and make faster progress
- improve the way the school looks at what it does well and not so well so they choose the areas that need to improve further.

We hope that the school continues to improve and that you enjoy the activities it provides for you.

Yours sincerely, Kevin Hodge Lead inspector