



The Merton Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119970
LEA Leicestershire
Inspection number 280701
Inspection dates 15 May 2006 to 16 May 2006
Reporting inspector Doris Bell AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cherry Drive
School category	Community		Syston
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Leicestershire LE7 2PT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2608150
Number on roll	326	Fax number	0116 2694308
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Peter Fox
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2000	Headteacher	Miss Shelagh Thomson

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most children have under-developed literacy and numeracy skills when they start this large primary school. Around 10% have learning difficulties and disabilities. Most pupils are White British but a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and 18 pupils speak English as an additional language. The school is the lead school for a 'Learning Network Community' and it achieved 'Investors in People' status earlier this year. There have been several changes of staff since the last inspection, including two changes of headteacher. The present head has been in post since September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This rapidly improving school currently provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils but demonstrates a very strong capacity for further improvement. This is because it is well led and managed and pupils' progress, which is satisfactory overall, is meticulously checked and is getting better all the time. A genuine will to improve is tangible throughout the school. Its impact is evident in the outstanding care, support and guidance given to pupils, in the rapid progress pupils in most year groups have made in the past year, and in their very good behaviour and personal development.

There is a buzz of learning activity throughout the school that starts with the good provision and progress in the Foundation Stage. It continues with a well-constructed curriculum in the rest of the school. Within this overall positive picture, however, pupils' progress and the quality of teaching vary in different year groups. This is because not all teachers are wholly secure in planning for the pupils' different stages of learning. In addition, the range of ways in which they can teach, and therefore pupils can learn, is restricted by the cramped nature of the accommodation. Because of this, pupils have few opportunities to find things out for themselves and take responsibility for some of their own learning. Nevertheless, they have responded well to the higher expectations the staff now have of them in relation to their learning and personal development.

This school knows what it needs to do to improve further. Its own evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate and perceptive and it has improved since its previous inspection. It provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Eliminate the variations in the quality of teaching in some year groups so that all pupils make the same good progress throughout the school.
- Continue urgently to pursue improvements to the accommodation in order to extend the opportunities given to the pupils to learn and make progress in different ways.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement, which is satisfactory overall, is improving rapidly. This is because teaching and learning are rigorously monitored, pupils' progress is meticulously tracked, and well-focused, challenging targets arise from these activities, for teachers and pupils. Progress towards all targets is rigorously checked by the school management and support is provided where necessary to increase the rate of pupils' learning. However, although standards are average overall, progress is variable in some year groups. It is good in the Foundation Stage; here pupils enter the school with below-average standards and reach broadly average standards by the time they start in Year 1. Giant leaps in learning have also been made in Year 6 over the past two years and current Year 6 pupils are set to exceed their challenging targets. There are

differences in the improvements made in reading, writing and mathematics, which the school is working very hard to eradicate. It has been particularly successful in improving progress in mathematics, which was the weakest subject last year, and current strategies are also improving pupils' progress in writing. There are now no differences in achievement between different groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, ensures that virtually all pupils behave very well at all times. The vast majority of pupils have good attitudes to school and to learning, and attendance is satisfactory. The school works hard to encourage good attendance and punctuality but a small number of pupils continue to be persistently late.

Pupils are keen to take responsibility and they know their views are important. Members of the school council are justifiably proud of their work in improving behaviour and discouraging bullying in the playground. Relationships are very good throughout the school. Pupils feel safe and are confident that any untoward behaviour will be sorted out quickly. They praise and follow the good example of teamwork set by their teachers, by working hard and helping others to learn. They make very good use of the opportunities to discuss their work with a partner during lessons, confident that this helps them to learn better.

Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of following a healthy lifestyle by exercising and eating healthily. They develop good social skills and contribute well to the community. By Year 6, they are mature, self-confident and articulate youngsters who are well prepared for life beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

While the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, much good teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers now have high expectations of themselves and of the pupils. They have risen well to the challenge of raising achievement as quickly as possible and have taken fully on board the recently implemented very rigorous assessment procedures. Nevertheless, while teaching is consistently good in the Foundation Stage, it remains more variable in the rest of the school.

In most classes, teachers plan and evaluate their work well, meeting the learning needs of different groups of pupils. Marking is usually perceptive and helpful. Some pupils praised greatly the 'two stars and a wish' strategy that their teacher uses to focus them on how to improve their work. They understand the process of target setting and welcomed the way teachers break down group targets to help individual pupils when necessary. Occasionally, however, teachers do not adapt published units of work well enough to match the different stages of pupils' learning, and this slows progress.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well. They instil in the pupils a real enjoyment of learning, creating a calm and purposeful learning environment within very restricted teaching areas. The cramped, awkwardly shaped open-plan accommodation places constraints on how teachers can teach. It limits the opportunities pupils have to pursue learning by themselves, and therefore their overall progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A well-structured curriculum, including that for the Foundation Stage, sustains pupils' interest in learning in and beyond the normal school day. The strong emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy skills ensures that every opportunity is taken to consolidate these skills in other subjects. The good links that are made between subjects contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning and their increasingly good progress. Improvements in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) enhance learning. However, the use of ICT in other subjects is not yet fully established, although the school is working hard on doing this. A stimulating programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education contributes in great measure to pupils' personal development, safety and well-being. A good number of pupils participate enthusiastically in the wide range of out-of-school clubs and activities, including sport and the arts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support provided for pupils is a real strength of the school. Everyone is valued equally and the most vulnerable are supported very effectively through initiatives such as the 'nurture group' and the very good links the school has established with outside agencies. These provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those who are at the early stages of learning English. All staff are highly committed to the best interests of the pupils, and the pupils recognise and appreciate this. Every effort is made to eliminate racism, prejudice and harassment of any sort. The very good academic and personal guidance now established for pupils is greatly enhancing their learning and personal development. The school works very hard to encourage parents to be genuine partners in their children's education. The procedures for child protection are very robust, as is the school's attention to health and safety matters.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The rapidly improving progress that pupils are now making is a direct result of effective leadership and management. The headteacher has gained the admiration and full support of staff, governors, pupils and parents through setting a very clear and purposeful direction for the work of the school. The very effective teamwork now evident amongst the staff is wholly focused on raising standards and achievement.

This teamwork was also acknowledged by the pupils. Staff speak very highly of the way the headteacher has empowered them to lead their areas of responsibility, and they do this well. Checks on teaching and learning are rigorous and weaknesses are followed up with good advice and support. Good progress has been made towards eliminating variations in teaching and learning but further work remains to be done. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and especially of the improvements taking place, and are very clear about their role in holding the school to account.

The school reaches out to parents, providing good support and guidance for them so that they can help their children. Parents very much appreciate what the school does for their children. This was evident in their responses to school and inspection questionnaires. The school's evaluation of its work is accurate and it has successfully addressed the issues identified at the last inspection. The capacity for further improvement is very strong.

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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?	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ 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

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	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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?	1	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	3	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 making us so very welcome in your school. It was a delight to talk to you and to find out that you are making faster progress as time goes on. You are clearly very happy at school, and you recognise how well the staff work together to help you learn. Here are some of the other things we liked about your school:

You work very hard and are making much better progress now because you have targets to help you improve and you know what to do to reach them.

Your behaviour is very good. You are kind and polite and you help each other and your teachers in all sorts of ways.

You have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe, and of why it is important to keep fit and healthy.

The excellent way in which the staff care for you and support and guide your learning is helping you to do better in every way.

The headteacher runs the school well. She listens carefully to what you and your parents say about how to make it better and tries very hard to make the changes you want, whenever this is possible.

We have asked your school to help you to do even better by:

Improving teaching even more so that the good progress that we saw in some classes can happen in every class.

Trying as hard as it possibly can to get the school building improved to give you more space so that you have more opportunities to do different things in lessons and find things out for yourselves.

We wish you well and hope that you will continue to enjoy learning more and more as you grow up.