



Merton Abbey Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102638
Local Authority Merton
Inspection number 286446
Inspection dates 12–13 December 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Coussins

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Path
School category	Community		South Wimbledon, Merton
Age range of pupils	3–11		London SW19 2JY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8542 7129
Number on roll (school)	191	Fax number	020 8543 7369
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Janet Finch-Taylor
		Headteacher	Mrs Stella Fry
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2004		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 12–13 December 2006	Inspection number 286446
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a culturally diverse area. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, those from minority ethnic groups and those whose first language is not English are higher than average. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Thirty-six pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The headteacher has been in post for three months.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school where children are happy and cared for well. They enjoy their time at the school and parents are pleased with what the school offers. As one parent said, 'The children greet the headteacher in the mornings with big smiles on their faces'. The good care, guidance and support provided by all staff develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem successfully and this contributes to their good personal development and well-being. Pupils have a good awareness of the need to live healthy lifestyles and stay safe.

When they start school, children's attainment is below what is normally expected for three year olds. They are given a satisfactory start to their education in the Foundation Stage, settling in well and making satisfactory overall progress. However, they make slower gains in key literacy areas such as linking sounds and letters when reading, and in developing their writing skills, than in other curriculum areas. Overall standards are below expected levels when they move into Year 1. Activities, particularly those planned in the outdoor area for the Reception children, often lack the excitement that make learning meaningful.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Key Stages 1 and 2. However, their reading and writing skills are below average by the end of Year 2. Some good teaching results in better progress later on. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 standards are average, but writing remains a weaker area, particularly pupils' handwriting skills. Overall, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough throughout the school.

Under the headteacher's good leadership, ably supported by the assistant headteacher, the staff form a strong team. There is a strong commitment to include all children, whatever their learning needs or backgrounds, and to improving standards and communication. One parent wrote, 'The whole staff are friendly and approachable...the weekly newsletters are good to get'. There is a clear view of strengths and weaknesses because of procedures to find out what the school is doing well and where improvement is needed. However, it is too soon to see the impact of actions taken by the relatively new leadership team and subject leaders. The school welcomes pupils who are new to the country, many of whom do not speak English and celebrates the cultural diversity of its population.

Pupils' personal skills and the level of their basic skills means they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education. One parent with three children at the school echoed a view shared by other parents by saying, 'I have recommended friends to send their children here and all have found it to be a very friendly and successful school'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading and writing by developing pupils' early reading skills and enhancing the quality of their handwriting at all ages.

- Improve the quality of teaching by promoting consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Improve the Foundation Stage curriculum by ensuring activities are exciting and meaningful, in particular the outdoor provision for the Reception children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average, and achievement is satisfactory given pupils' starting points. By the end of Year 2 standards are below average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. Lower achievement in phonic work holds the pupils back in their reading and writing. A carefully structured approach has recently been introduced but the outcomes are not yet high enough to show an improvement in standards. Achievement is better in Key Stage 2, and by the end of Year 6 standards have improved with good attainment in science. Although improvements have been made in writing, it remains a weaker aspect across the school, particularly pupils' handwriting skills. The school exceeded its 2006 targets for those reaching the nationally expected Level 4 in English and mathematics and saw a big increase in the numbers reaching the higher Level 5 in English. Successful strategies, which led to the improvements in Year 6, are beginning to be used to accelerate the progress made by younger pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are learning English as an additional language are well supported to enable them to achieve as well as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Several pupils said, 'The school is not just good, it's great, because we love everything we do'. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. One pupil commented that the only thing that could be better would be that the school went up to Year 11, 'So we would never have to leave'. Attendance is satisfactory and improving, and the school does all it can to encourage regular attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and contributes well to their developing confidence. There is a good understanding of the need to eat healthy food. Younger pupils happily explained why they were eating fruit at playtimes, 'It's got vitamins and makes you big and strong and helps your brain work better and, if we eat chocolate our teeth will fall out'. They participate enthusiastically in the range of physical activities provided. Pupils enjoy their responsibilities as prefects and school councillors. However the school councillors feel they would like more opportunities to find out what other children would like them to do.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good elements. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, and as a result pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Teachers are skilled in asking good questions, which encourage pupils to think for themselves. They provide pupils with lots of opportunities to work together and develop speaking and listening skills.

Teachers' use of interactive whiteboards engages and motivates pupils. Expectations of achievement are not always high enough and as a result, work is not always pitched at different levels to challenge pupils of all abilities. The pace of teaching is sometimes too slow to ensure that pupils make the progress they should. Across the school, there are recently introduced and well organised systems in place which are beginning to help teachers assess pupils' progress more accurately and provide support to help pupils achieve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features. Pupils are appreciative of the good range of after-school clubs and the advantages of a variety of valuable residential visits. Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is a strength of the school. Consequently pupils have a keen awareness of healthy eating, the benefits of physical exercise and the dangers of substance abuse. The school recognises that imaginative and stimulating links between subjects are not fully developed. Although provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is limited by outdated hardware, it is satisfactory. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory although activities often lack the excitement that ensures that learning is meaningful. The outdoor curriculum is underdeveloped, particularly for the Reception class, who often undertake the same activities as those in the Nursery.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and supported because the school takes good care of them. Relationships between adults and pupils are trusting and productive. These positive features help pupils to learn well and develop good personal and social skills. Procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety are good and understood by all staff. Good use of external agencies and visiting specialists, and attention to the needs of vulnerable pupils has a positive impact on pupils' education and learning. Child protection and vetting procedures are robust and meet statutory requirements. Recently introduced targets are helping pupils to have a satisfactory understanding of their achievements and what they must do to improve. Good systems have now been established to track

pupils' progress and identify those with learning difficulties so that they can be suitably supported. Pupils whose first language is not English also receive satisfactory support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The good leadership of the new headteacher has already laid a firm foundation for future success. She is well supported by the assistant headteacher. Together they are building a staff team committed to accelerating pupil progress and lifting standards. In a short space of time they have established a school where there is a positive ethos and equal opportunities are promoted in a satisfactory way. Newly defined roles for the subject co-ordinators mean that they all have a clear view of their duties, however most are at an early stage in developing this aspect of their work.

Although not all members of the governing body have enough understanding of information on national tests to give them the confidence to ask challenging questions, they support the school and work hard to play an active part in plans to move the school forward. The school improvement plan consists of a series of well-defined priorities for action. This, together with the business-like response to the issues raised by the last inspection, indicates that the school has satisfactory capacity to make progress.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to let you know how much my colleague and I enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you all for making us so welcome, for talking to us about your work and telling us what you think about your school.

This is what we found out:

- yours is a friendly, happy school, which provides you with a satisfactory education and it is getting better all the time
- we saw for ourselves, and you and your parents told us how much you enjoy coming to school
- everyone takes good care of you and helps you develop your confidence and the belief that you can succeed in whatever you do
- you behave well in lessons and in the playground and you get on well with each other
- your teachers make sure you have a good range of clubs and visits, which you enjoy
- your new headteacher is doing a good job to make your school even better than it is.

We know you try hard in your lessons and we think you could do even better, especially in your reading and writing. Your teachers can help by expecting more from you and giving you more challenges. The activities for children in the Nursery and Reception classes could be more exciting, especially when the Reception children are learning outside, to help them have an even better start to their education.

We were lucky enough to be in school just before Christmas, and although we did not see your Christmas show, we could hear your lovely singing and could tell you were really enjoying yourselves.

Thank you again for all your help.

Yours sincerely

Margaret CoussinsLead Inspector