



Merton Park Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102639
Local Authority Merton
Inspection number 286447
Inspection date 24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Christopher Gray

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Lane
School category	Community		Merton Park
Age range of pupils	3-11		London SW19 3HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8542 7128
Number on roll (school)	250	Fax number	020 8542 1788
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Jillian Ashton
		Headteacher	Peter Steward (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

There is a very wide mixture of ethnicities in the school population. Children of White British heritage form about 60% of the total; most other ethnic groups are represented but each accounts for only a small percentage of the total population. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is above average, though only a few are at the early stages of learning English. Many pupils' social circumstances are favourable and their attainment on entry is broadly in line with that found in most schools. The deputy is currently the acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils develop into mature and responsible young people by the time they reach Year 6. Their behaviour and personal development are outstanding. One of the things pupils most value is the chance to take increasing responsibility as they get older. A group of Year 6 pupils wanted to run a fair trading stall. After they had written to the Parent-Teachers' Association, they were given a budget to buy stock, which they are going to sell at lunchtimes. The choice of products reflects their firmly held opinion that, while it is vital to understand what makes for a healthy diet, the decision must be left to the individual. As one girl said, 'You should listen to other people's advice, then think for yourself what's right.' Many parents wrote to say how pleased they are with their children's education. One summed up the views of many by writing, 'I am proud of Merton Park and recommend it highly.'

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Standards in English and mathematics are high by Year 6 and those in science and information and communication technology (ICT) are not far behind. Children in the Foundation Stage make an excellent start to their schooling because of outstanding provision. The children in Nursery and Reception mix together in some lessons so that adults can tailor activities closely to their stages of development. Adults make excellent use of assessment data to ensure that children progress as well as they can.

The outstanding curriculum is much enjoyed by pupils. Links are made between subjects to enliven learning. ICT was used in a literacy lesson to produce newspaper articles about imaginary crimes; one pupil wrote: 'The crisp stealing criminal is currently in Japan, unaware that everyone knows about his little nibbling secret.' Teaching is outstanding because teachers build on their strong relationships with pupils to produce exciting working environments. Year 5 pupils were challenged not only to spot patterns in a mathematical investigation, but also to explain in clear language what they had found, in order to convince the rest.

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are excellent. The school nurtures a sense of responsibility and individuality in pupils, which comes across strongly in discussion with them. Assessment is used well to track pupils' progress, but there are a few occasions when progress is uneven. The school is in the process of devolving responsibility for data analysis to the teachers themselves so that they can respond more quickly when pupils need more help.

Outstanding leadership and management underpin the success of this school. The headteacher and deputy (currently acting headteacher) are determined to make continual improvements to the way the school runs and the impact of this is seen in the good standards achieved in many areas of the curriculum, not just in English, mathematics and science.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable class teachers to take more responsibility for analysing assessment data, so that they can make more effective use of it in promoting pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. From a broadly average beginning in the Foundation Stage, pupils reach high standards in English and mathematics by Year 6. Standards in science are well above average and there is much evidence of good standards in ICT and art. Music and physical education also play a big part in pupils' learning. National tests in Year 6 show that the value added by the school has been rising since the school became an all-through primary a few years ago. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also make very good progress and generally reach above average standards in teachers' assessments. Lower results in 2006 were caused by a group of pupils who began school with fewer skills than is expected of their age, but tracking records show that their progress was nonetheless outstanding. There is no underachievement in the school. Pupils with English as an additional language are very well supported and progress at similar rates to other pupils. One parent wrote: 'All the team have been helping my children. They are working hard to improve their English, so thank you very much.'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their high degree of enjoyment of learning is summed up by the parent who wrote: 'Both of my children are really happy at school. The school has fostered a real love of reading and desire to learn.' Their attendance is above average and improving, as parents see the benefit of not taking term-time holidays. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They will take with them many memories of special moments in school, one of which is that their teachers 'always give everyone a chance'. This helps them develop a strong social and moral sense - one of the current school council's objectives is to make the peer mediator scheme work even better. This is where older, trained pupils help if pupils fall out with each other. Pupils are adamant that bullying is not a problem in the school and would be dealt with well if it happened. Pupils' basic skills and their appreciation of personal choice show that their economic well-being is highly developed. They know how to keep safe and healthy but value the freedom to make up their own minds: 'You live your own life and it's your choice', said one boy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. During the working day, the school has a buzz of hard work and excitement. Year 6 pupils were observed in a literacy lesson, where they were working on a short story. Some pupils were drawing up a list of similarities and differences between the two main characters; others were answering questions

and a third group were looking at speech patterns, to draw conclusions about character. Lessons involving different tasks for pupils of varying ability are a regular part of teachers' practice, as pupils' past work shows. Pupils value this; as one said, 'We all have different abilities and some need harder work.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it is designed to appeal to pupils' interests and because it enables them to reach very good standards in a range of subjects. It is enriched by exciting trips, such as one where pupils made Roman-style pottery. Excellent links, such as that with a professional orchestra, add reality to pupils' learning. A group of pupils are very much looking forward to performing in the Royal Albert Hall at Easter. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. For some, it leads to more formal learning early whereas others can continue the early years' curriculum into Year 1.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are outstanding, resulting in their excellent personal development. Health and safety procedures and those for child protection are rigorous. Pupils have no doubt that they feel safe and happy in school and that adults would help them if necessary. They know and use their targets in literacy and numeracy to improve their work and act on comments made by teachers in their marking. Assessment procedures are thorough and are used well by senior management to track pupils' progress and support pupils whose progress is not as good as it should be. The school is working on extending this responsibility to class teachers, so that they can keep a closer eye on their own work and give help more immediately where it is needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding because there is no complacency in the school. For example, given pupils' outstanding behaviour, leaders set about encouraging them to take as much responsibility in the school as possible. One pupil said how marvellous it is that they are able to suggest clubs that they might run themselves. Standards have been rising steadily in Year 6. Those in Year 2 have fluctuated, but the school has clearly analysed why this is so and taken effective action. Governors have been involved in challenging the school to see that provision is as good as it should be. Improvements are made to the curriculum as a result of the monitoring work undertaken by coordinators. These examples are evidence of the school's outstanding capacity both to evaluate its work accurately and to act on this to bring about further improvements.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

My visit to your school coincided with the first snow of the year. You were naturally very excited and built a very good snowman in the playground. Even with such a distraction, I could see how excellent your behaviour is. You were very welcoming and polite, and helped me enjoy my visit to your school.

One of the things I most enjoyed about my day was talking to the two groups of pupils. They showed me that many of you are very good at expressing your ideas and explaining what you believe and why. These are important skills for life.

I found that your school is outstanding, which is another word for excellent. You help to make it so by your responsible and considerate behaviour. You told me how much you enjoy school and I saw this myself when I visited all the classrooms. Teaching and the lessons you learn are also excellent and help you to reach very good standards in many subjects, not just English, mathematics and science. I saw some very good art work all round the school and many examples of interesting work in ICT.

All the adults work very hard to make your school so successful. Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are excellent leaders and are constantly looking for ways to make your learning even better. There is only one thing I have asked the school to do, and they had already thought of it for themselves. This is to do with how the teachers use the regular tests they give you to gauge how much progress you are making.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at Merton Park and that the concert in the Royal Albert Hall goes well.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Gray
Lead inspector