

Merrow CofE Controlled Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125160
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315173
Inspection date	6 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr C Pote
Headteacher	Mrs C S Martin
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2004
School address	Kingfisher Drive Merrow Park Guildford GU4 7EA
Telephone number	01483 561501
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects:

- the factors contributing to the improvements to standards
- how well pupils assess and review their own learning.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Pupils at this smaller than average primary school come predominantly from a White British background. The remainder come from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is about average but very few of these are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The nature of these includes specific learning and speech language and communication difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Merrow CofE Infants is a good school. It has a number of outstanding aspects to its work. Children get off to an exceptionally good start in Reception because of outstanding provision. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 because of good teaching and a well-planned curriculum. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above average overall. High quality care, guidance, support, and a very positive school climate lead to outstanding personal development and well-being for pupils.

Parents hold very positive views about the school and are extremely pleased with both the care and education provided for their children. A strong partnership has been established with outside agencies, and with parents who are very supportive of the school. The headteacher's leadership, the school's atmosphere, the quality of teaching, staff approachability and the care and support provided all receive particular praise from parents. Typical comments from the parents' questionnaires included, 'Impressed with the teaching', 'The school is very well led and teachers are very approachable', and a 'Happy, caring ethos'.

Good leadership and management are key factors contributing to the school's success and the good improvements made since the last inspection. An experienced headteacher is well focused on providing high quality provision and maximising pupils' achievement. She provides outstanding leadership and is well supported by other senior leaders. With her staff, she has created a very positive atmosphere for pupils to learn and staff to work. Leadership roles have been more widely shared recently and teachers' expertise is used well. Performance is systematically reviewed and the findings are used effectively to bring about improvements. Teaching and standards have improved as a result of this action. Governors possess a good understanding of the school's performance. This enables them to offer constructive challenge as well as providing strong support.

Since the last inspection, standards by the end of Year 2 have improved from average to well above average. Year 2 assessments in 2007 were well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. A number of factors have contributed to these continuous improvements. Improvements to the Foundation Stage provision mean that children get off to an excellent start. There is now a smoother transition from Reception to Year 1. Assessment procedures are sharper and challenging targets for year groups and individuals are set. The headteacher's emphasis on improving teaching and learning has been successful and there are now higher proportions of outstanding practice in the school. There is a clear plan and programme to further raise the profile of mathematics so standards are more in line with reading and writing. The steady improvements in standards in recent years demonstrate a good capacity to improve.

Teaching and learning are outstanding in Reception. In Year 1 and 2, teaching is good with examples of outstanding practice. Across the school, teachers have very good relationships with their pupils. Pupils are enthusiastic and respond exceptionally well to the high expectations of behaviour and learning. The purpose of the lessons is made clear so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers' clear instructions and demonstrations promote learning well. In most classes, teachers use assessment data well to match activities and tasks to pupils' abilities and needs. Occasionally, the pace of lessons declines and tasks are not well matched to pupils' learning needs particularly the more able. When this happens pupils are not sufficiently well challenged and progress slows. Teaching assistants are well deployed. They make a valuable

contribution to learning, particularly for those pupils who need additional support with language and literacy.

A good curriculum helps ensure pupils achieve well, and makes an excellent contribution to their personal development. While there is strong emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics, successful themed weeks such as 'art and music', 'science and design and technology' add enjoyment to learning. Pupils have good opportunities to apply and develop their literacy skills in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2 created interesting poems about seaside holidays in the past. They use a range of resources and their study skills to find out interesting facts about marine life. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use and apply numeracy skills in other subjects but they are not as well developed. The school has recognised the need in Years 1 and 2 to further extend links between subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support teaching and learning in different areas, and helps motivate pupils. Year 1 pupils produced colourful pictures and captions when reporting their recent visit to 'Bird World'. The outdoor learning facilities are good with garden areas, a pond for scientific study and a range of balancing and climbing equipment. A good range of clubs, visits and visitors enrich pupils' learning. These are thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils.

There are highly effective systems to safeguard pupils and to monitor their attainment and progress. Pupils have specific learning targets in reading, writing and mathematics so they know what they are working on to improve. These are reviewed regularly and pupils' ability to assess their own learning and how well they are progressing against their targets is developing well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are courteous, friendly and kind to others. Several parents remarked how successful the school is at building their children's confidence and promoting a love of learning. Pupils appreciate and celebrate their fellow pupils' achievements and personal qualities in assembly. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected by their good attendance and their keen participation in activities. Behaviour is outstanding because of the high expectations of all staff and the strong relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and show an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating, exercising regularly and keeping safe. They thrive on the additional responsibilities given and contribute well to the wider community, for example, by raising funds for a variety of charities. At Merrow, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education because, by the time they leave, they have very good literacy skills and good skills in numeracy and ICT. In addition to these, their personal and social skills are exceptionally well developed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children's overall attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year but is usually broadly typical for their age. Children settle quickly because of highly effective induction arrangements. Outstanding leadership by the Foundation Stage coordinator, high quality teaching and an exciting curriculum enable children to make excellent progress in all areas of learning. A wide range of stimulating activities is planned both inside and outside the classrooms around interesting themes such as food, transport, mini beasts and growth. Teachers and teaching assistants provide an effective blend of adult-led tasks and opportunities for children to explore, be creative and work independently. There are very good systems to assess children's attainment and progress. The learning environment and the activities provided are highly stimulating and inspire and motivate the children. The current assessments show that by the end of Reception, standards are well above those expected.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons maintain a brisk pace and that tasks are challenging for all pupils.
- Increase the links between subjects in Years 1 and 2 and provide more opportunities for pupils to apply numeracy skills in other subjects.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

19 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Merrow CofE Controlled Infant School, Guildford, GU4 7EA

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed my visit and would like to tell you about some of the things I found out. Yours is a good school. It has a number of outstanding features.

These are strengths of the school.

- Children in Reception get off to an excellent start.
- You all thoroughly enjoy school and your attendance is good.
- The school is a very caring, friendly and pleasant place to be.
- Your behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school.
- You show an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- Teaching is good, which is why you are making such good progress.
- You reach well above average standards in reading and writing by the end of Year 2.
- A good range of learning activities are provided for you, including clubs, visitors and visits.
- The school is extremely well led by your headteacher and she receives good support from other senior staff.
- Staff take excellent care of you and give you outstanding support.
- Your parents give the school good support and are very pleased with the care and education provided.

There are two areas that the school could work on to make it even better.

- On occasions, your teachers could challenge you more and make sure that the lesson moves along at a good pace.
- Teachers could give you more opportunities to practise and use your numeracy skills in other subjects.

I wish you all the very best for the future and keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector