

Merton Abbey Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102638
Local Authority	Merton
Inspection number	335938
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Sarah McDermott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Janet Finch-Taylor
Headteacher	Mrs Stella Fry
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the data the school had collected on pupils' progress, the school development plan and procedures for keeping pupils safe. Over 70 parental questionnaires were returned and scrutinised by the inspection team, who also spoke to a number of parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of teaching and the curriculum, to ensure pupils, particularly girls and White British pupils, achieve well enough
- whether standards and achievement are improving in mathematics attendance rates
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in contributing to the school's improvement.

Information about the school

Merton Abbey Primary is a small, one-form-entry school situated to the south of Wimbledon. A high proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and from a wide range of different countries of origin. Nearly half of pupils do not speak English at home. The proportion of pupils who have special needs and/or disabilities, and need extra help because they find concentrating difficult or have specific medical conditions, is average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a full-time Reception class and separate morning and afternoon Nursery sessions. The school works closely with the adjacent Abbey Children's Centre and manages its own breakfast and after-school clubs for up to 16 pupils. It has gained several accreditations, including the Healthy Schools Award and the Silver Eco-Schools award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Merton Abbey Primary is a satisfactory school which has the care of the pupils at its heart. The staff and governors share the headteacher's values and ambitions for the school, encapsulated in its motto 'to work hard and care for each other'. As a result, pupils are happy and personally fulfilled. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as reflected in their improving attendance rates. Newcomers are welcomed from a wide range of backgrounds and very soon feel that they are valuable members of the community. One mother commented, 'I have to say that, from the moment we arrived at the school, we were all made to feel very much at home.' The high proportion of pupils who come from families who do not speak English at home are very effectively supported to achieve well, particularly in learning English. Pupils behave sensibly, know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and are good ambassadors for their school. By the time pupils leave school in Year 6, they are thoughtful and mature young adults.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning and leave with standards below average in English and science. This year the school has helped pupils to make good progress in mathematics so that they reached standards in line with national averages by the end of Year 6. Specific support of potentially underachieving pupils and the involvement of parents in workshops has reaped rewards. However, the school has not paid enough attention to standards in writing, which have dropped. In part, this has been due to several changes in the teaching staff. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils. Not all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of pupils and they do not always give the pupils the wherewithal to extend their learning with helpful targets. There are a good range of activities in lessons and visits to the locality to enliven the curriculum. Opportunities are sometimes missed to use these experiences to improve the quality of writing.

The headteacher and her senior leadership team regularly monitor how the school is performing. They keep the governors well informed. However, this accurate self-evaluation is not always acted on swiftly enough to ensure that dips in achievement are stemmed in time. Mathematics has been tackled successfully and senior leaders are now starting to address the low writing standards. The headteacher is aware that refresher training for a few staff members in child-protection procedures is required as soon as possible. The school works particularly well with parents and is constantly thinking of different and innovative ways to involve them in their children's learning. Since the last inspection, the school has made satisfactory progress in tackling the areas for improvement, although a sense of urgency is not sufficiently evident. Consequently, the school has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards in writing by using exciting opportunities across and beyond lessons to stimulate the pupils' interest more effectively.
- Ensure all leaders and managers, including governors, rigorously evaluate the school's performance and act upon their findings to enable them to improve pupils' achievement more swiftly.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by setting higher expectations and giving pupils more chance to take the lead in their own learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils from many different backgrounds and home countries get on well together in the classroom and out at play. Pupils are quick to include newcomers in their games and to help them to integrate. One boy exclaimed, 'My friend couldn't speak English when he arrived and now he's really good!' The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. Pupils make the most of their large, grassy recreation field, although sometimes play can become a little boisterous. Pupils know how to lead healthy lives. They enjoy participating in sporting competitions and relish the well-balanced school lunches. Pupils feel safe and know who to turn to if they are worried or upset. There is very little bullying in the school and if any arises pupils know who to turn to and that it will be dealt with effectively by the staff. The school has persevered in improving attendance, through careful monitoring and the incentive of cups and prizes. It is now in line with national averages. Consequently, together with their broadly average literacy and mathematical skills, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their next stage of education and, ultimately, the world of work. Pupils keenly take up opportunities to help around the school. School councillors wear their badges with pride and the Eco-Warriors carefully explain the benefits of recycling. Pupils selected to be Junior Community Wardens have a well-developed sense of responsibility for their local neighbourhood.

Pupils learn satisfactorily in lessons. They look up to their teachers and most follow instructions carefully. When teachers organise interesting activities, pupils are enthusiastic and get down to work productively, as observed in a mathematical problem solving with chocolate bars in Year 6, and in a Year 2 lesson where pupils made their own jam sandwiches to help them order instructions and learn about 'time connectives'. On the other hand, a few pupils can be difficult to engage, and lessons can become lacklustre. A few of the more able pupils said they would appreciate having the chance to plan and organise how they learn. In some classes, pupils present their written work with pride, but this is not sufficiently widespread, particularly when pupils do not have guidelines in their exercise books.

Academically, pupils achieve satisfactorily, although the rate of progress can be uneven, because of the differences in quality of teaching from class to class, and attainment in writing is still too low. Pupils with special needs and/or disabilities make similar progress

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to their classmates owing to careful attention from teachers and teaching assistants. Girls achieve as well as boys. Pupils from White British backgrounds make satisfactory progress, but pupils who speak languages other than English at home make good progress. Many arrive at school with little or no English but, with carefully targeted support, they make great strides in their acquisition of the English language.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In lessons, clear objectives give pupils a good focus for learning. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to work in pairs to motivate each other and to assess each other's work. However, on occasion teachers talk too much and pupils start to lose concentration. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support pupils new to the English language or those who have specific learning needs. Teachers use interactive whiteboards imaginatively to illustrate ideas and involve pupils in lively learning.

Regular assessment allows teachers to gauge each pupil's individual progress and intervene if a pupil falls behind. Learning targets are less successful as they are not personal enough and do not give pupils scope to take the lead in their learning. On

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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occasion, this detracts from the learning of the more able, who have the potential to work more independently and do not necessarily need to sit through the full explanations at the beginning of lessons. Some excellent marking boosts self-esteem as well as giving pointers to pupils for self-improvement, but such high-quality marking is not yet consistent across all classes.

Pupils frequently mention they like school because of the interesting visits, visitors and clubs on offer. The school makes good use of the local Polka and New Wimbledon theatres, as well as participating in folk dance festivals, to promote cultural development. Recycling workshops, anti-graffiti plays and charitable fundraising promotes responsible citizenship. The main outside areas have been improved for positive and purposeful recreation. The school carefully checks that activities match the needs of the different groups, so pupils learn about one another's celebrations and faiths. The curriculum has been successfully adapted to ensure pupils make good progress in their mathematics. However, it is not effective enough in ensuring opportunities are grasped in subjects outside literacy lessons or through linked themes to promote a love of writing.

Parents have high trust in the school to look after their children. They regard the school as a support to the whole family. One parent wrote, 'The school has plenty of time for the children as a whole and as individuals.' Vulnerable pupils receive special help through very effective links with outside agencies. The site is safe and secure and welfare arrangements are effective. After several years of low attendance, the school now has tight systems to encourage regular attendance and to check the safety of absentees.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher puts great store on the pupils becoming rounded and valuable members of the school and wider community. She and her senior leadership team have a clear view of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic needs of the school's pupils and successfully create a haven where pupils get on very well with each other. One parent added, 'No matter what home life or background each child comes from, the headteacher and her team consistently encourage respect for each other.' Effective links with the neighbourhood locally, and with other countries globally, raise the pupils' awareness of how other people live. Links with the wider British community are not as

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well developed. The school ensures all pupils have opportunities to participate in school activities and outings, with careful attention to disability access and financial stringencies. The school makes sure that pupils are safe in its care, with robust checking of staff and careful scrutiny of the site. Staff know the correct procedures.

The school has an effective school development plan, identifying clearly what needs to be improved. The relatively new senior leadership team are getting to grips with raising achievement. In particular, concerted efforts in improving mathematics have proved successful. However, the regular monitoring of lessons and analysis of data is not always translated into successful action for improvement, as is evident in writing performance. The school is not making sufficient use of self-evaluation as a working tool to drive improvement consistently and rigorously. Staff feel they could be more involved in the self-evaluation process. The quality of teaching remains satisfactory as at the time of the last inspection, although the good practice of some new teachers is now starting to have a positive impact. Governors are well organised and starting to follow up on the attainment of different groups of pupils and to challenge any underperformance. They appraise their own governor performance regularly but are not relating this sufficiently to whole-school performance.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage because they all receive home visits and arrive with confidence, already knowing some familiar faces. They are admitted with generally limited skills for three-year-olds, make satisfactory progress in

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most areas of learning and leave at the end of Reception with skills below expectations for their age. Since the last inspection, the outside area has improved and now includes a sun awning and a climbing wall. Nevertheless, the range of activities indoors and outdoors are satisfactory rather than good, because they tend to keep the children busy rather than always having a positive effect on their learning needs. Children enjoy chances to use crayons and paper, but there is scope for more imaginative and innovative ways to engage children in writing, particularly as this is a priority for both the Early Years Foundation Stage and the whole school. Singing and counting activities capture the children's attention and are particularly effective in helping non-English speakers acquire the language. Staff use the interactive whiteboard well for stimulating, hands-on activities.

Children behave very well and join in games willingly. They play together positively in groups of boys and girls from different ethnic backgrounds. By the end of the Nursery session, a few children become lacklustre when whole-class activities, such as story time, are not carefully matched to their needs. The two joint leaders of the Early Years Foundation Stage collaborate effectively, resulting in satisfactory leadership and management of learning. They ensure staff build up good relationships with parents and are always on hand to answer their queries. On occasion, the departure of the Nursery children hampers the learning of the Reception children by restricting the space available for activities, although the leaders are beginning to address this.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents who returned questionnaires or who spoke to the inspection team are very pleased with the school. They consider that the headteacher and all the staff are very approachable and make the school a welcoming and friendly place. One parent reflected others' views, 'I have found the staff approachable when my child was experiencing difficulties with friendships. I was always kept up to date with any problems and the outcomes.' Inspectors fully endorse these views. The vast majority of parents believe their children are making sufficient progress and the school is meeting their needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Merton Abbey Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 79 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 205 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	54	35	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	58	32	41	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	50	37	47	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	44	41	52	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	49	40	51	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	44	42	53	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	37	49	62	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	37	44	56	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	34	44	56	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	42	44	56	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	32	42	53	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	46	40	51	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	54	35	44	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Pupils

Inspection of Merton Abbey Primary School, South Wimbledon SW19 2JY

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you very much for helping with the inspection by talking to us and showing us what you can do. We agree with your parents that you are in safe hands and we know you enjoy school.

You get on very well with your teachers and friends. We were impressed with the way you welcome and include new pupils from different countries in your games. Your behaviour is good and we are pleased to see that your attendance is improving. You know how to lead safe and healthy lives. We were especially impressed with the way you are helping to make your school and neighbourhood a pleasant and sustainable place through recycling and the Junior Warden scheme.

You make satisfactory progress to reach broadly average standards overall, although your work in writing is not as good as that in mathematics. We think some teaching is good but, in some classes, expectations of what you can do are not high enough. Your headteacher and her team of senior teachers lead the school satisfactorily. They know what needs improving, have already helped you gain better results in your mathematics and now are concentrating on improving your writing. A small minority of you would like to know more about how you are doing, so we have asked the school to review how targets are used so you know when you have successfully reached them.

To make your education better, I have asked your school to do three things:

- improve your writing by making the most of exciting activities and visits to enthuse you
- frequently check how you are progressing and move quickly to put things right if progress is not as quick as it should be
- set you plenty of challenges in lessons and give you the chance to learn independently.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. We know that your teachers make your school a special place for you. You can do your bit by continuing to be positive, behaving well and making the most of your time at Merton Abbey Primary.

Yours faithfully

Sarah McDermott

Lead Inspector

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