

# Merebrook Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131670
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	341190
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ted Wheatley

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	171
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lynne Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steve Upton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 May 2007
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. About 60 per cent of inspectors' time during the school day was spent looking at learning activities. Fourteen lessons or parts of lessons were seen and seven teachers observed. Meetings were held with staff, pupils, governors and local authority staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at planning, self-evaluation and 33 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- whether recent staffing problems that were affecting school effectiveness have been overcome
- how well the school has dealt with a recent dip in standards in literacy
- how effectively the school is working to improve teaching and the curriculum
- how well pupils know their targets and how to improve their work
- the impact of efforts being made to improve standards.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school in which most pupils come from White British backgrounds. Small numbers of pupils come from Polish, African, Pakistani, Indian and other European and Asian backgrounds. English is the most commonly spoken language and Polish, Urdu and French are the most frequently spoken other languages by a very small minority of pupils. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, but varies between year groups. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties and a very small number have behaviour and emotional difficulties or hearing impairment. The school has recently experienced staffing problems which has resulted in several temporary arrangements being made to cover a series of absences.

**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

This is a satisfactory school. Recent staffing problems have delayed some planned developments and been expensive in terms of funding temporary staff. The local authority is now providing financial support which is freeing up funds to acquire resources to restart the school's improvement.

Standards are broadly average, although there was a dip in reading and writing in the most recent Key Stage 1 assessments. Attainment in literacy has started to improve and is now similar to that in numeracy and science. This is because the school has diverted some resources and acquired others to focus on literacy. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress, but for some of the most able pupils progress is slower. In addition, pupils do not have well established independent learning skills or opportunities to write imaginatively or at length, which prevents their reaching higher levels of attainment. In the Reception class children make good and improving progress, especially in their language skills.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and make good progress in all areas of learning. They develop positive attitudes to learning and this is successfully built on in Years 1 and 2. As a result, pupils enjoy school and they behave well. They are enthusiastic about the activities in lessons, work together well and support each other when needed. They readily contribute to a wide range of charities and the school council plays a sound part in ensuring pupils' views are listened to and acted on. Pupils feel safe. They have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise. The preparation for their future lives is broadly satisfactory.

In the best lessons, teachers and support staff provide challenging activities and encourage pupils to use their imaginations and work out things for themselves, but this is not always the case. Mostly adults use what they know about pupils' progress to plan work matched to their abilities. However, sometimes pupils themselves are not fully aware of how well they are doing or of what they need to do to take the next steps in their learning. The curriculum provides a sound range of enrichment activities. A good example is the 'multicultural week' where activities in nearly all lessons were connected to traditions in a wide variety of countries. Generally, links between subjects are satisfactory and improving.

The quality of pastoral care is good. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, vulnerable pupils and those with English as an additional language receive sound support and help. Incidents between pupils are dealt with well and pupils say they know who to turn to for help.

The headteacher has worked effectively to deal with the recent staff difficulties. He and

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others in leadership positions know what the school needs to do to improve, staff work together well, and the school is starting to move on again. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. Governors give a high level of support to the whole staff. They are well informed and provide considerable challenge to help the school improve. Despite this, a significant minority of staff feel that they do not always know what activities are taking place, and some, particularly support staff, feel undervalued.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise standards by providing opportunities for all pupils, especially the more able, to:
  - write at length
  - work independently and make decisions about their own learning
  - develop creativity and imagination in the tasks they do
- Improve teaching to the quality of the best by making sure:
  - work is always challenging
  - assessment is used effectively to ensure all pupils know their targets and how to achieve them
- Improve communications so that all staff are:
  - kept fully informed about planned activities
  - feel valued for the work they do.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

The quality of learning is generally satisfactory and often good. Standards are slowly rising, especially in literacy where they had fallen behind other subjects a little. This is because reorganised staffing, extra resources and improved use of assessment to match work to pupils' needs are starting to have a positive impact. However, the progress by some of the most able pupils is variable because work is not always challenging enough. While there is progress in improving writing skills, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write independently. Overall, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of sound support. The very small number with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress in acquiring English skills which they use effectively in all of their learning.

Pupils enjoy learning and disruptive behaviour is rare. Pupils respect and like the adults they meet in school and are confident in asking for help when they need it. Pupils have a good understanding of what should be in a healthy diet although a small number cheerfully agree they do not always eat as well as they should! The great majority take part in at least one of the physical activities run by the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they have a sound understanding of the values and beliefs of other cultures. The work of the school council is improving after a fairly inactive period. Pupils' involvement beyond the school, for example, fundraising

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and singing at a local elderly peoples' home, is good. Pupils' attendance is average.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

Pupils enjoy lessons and mostly work hard. Where teaching is good, work is fast paced, interesting and challenges pupils to think about their own learning and to be creative. In most lessons teachers and support staff work closely together to plan work closely matched to pupils' needs. Occasionally support staff feel their work is not appreciated, although the inspection found no basis to suggest that this is the case. In some lessons activities are too tightly controlled, inhibiting pupils from planning their own work or showing their own creativity. While most pupils know how well they are doing, some do not, and do not know what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum is improving after being affected by a period of restricted funding. The quality of information and communication technology is improving with the purchase of new equipment and training for teachers. Links between subjects to make work relevant to pupils' lives are improving. Personal, social and health education is good and healthy lifestyles are effectively promoted. A range of activities is planned to raise pupils'

<sup>1</sup> 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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awareness of the wider world and are linked into all subjects well, although there are few notices or displays around school in languages other than English.

Good relationships play an important part in the school's pastoral care. Individually, pupils are well cared for and they feel confident in going to any adult for help. The care for vulnerable pupils is sound and improving, as is the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The links with support agencies are also improving and the school makes sound use of available resources to help pupils with English as an additional language.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher is well supported by senior leaders in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses. Others in leadership positions have a sound grasp of actions needed for further improvement. Gaps in progress between different groups of pupils are decreasing, and teaching and the curriculum are slowly becoming better. The capacity for further development is satisfactory, now that the financial situation is improving and staffing is stable. Overall, staff are committed to improvement, but not all feel fully informed about the details of organised activities, for example, visitors to the school. Governance is strong and helping drive improvement and issues from the previous inspection have mainly been addressed. At the time of the inspection safeguarding arrangements were good.

Links with parents and carers are satisfactory overall and the school plans to improve them, especially to support the work of volunteer parents who help in classrooms. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory and based on sound evaluation of how the school needs to improve.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in all areas of learning from low starting points. Through free access to inside and outdoor areas, children engage in a wide range of learning activities and are able to make their own choices about where they want to learn. Most children take responsibility for some aspects of their own learning and their personal, social and emotional development is good. They behave well and get on well with each, whatever their backgrounds. Provision is good and improving. The teaching of language skills is developing well so that children's progress in this area is fast improving. Welfare arrangements are good and effective links with homes and nurseries ensure children settle in rapidly. Adults are patient and supportive so that children develop confidence and feel secure. Leadership and management are good, with a clear understanding of the need for further improvements, especially widening children's vocabulary.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

About one fifth of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. Overall they are pleased with the school. They feel it supports their children well and that they are happy in school. Parents and carers are pleased with the education provided and for the most part with the progress children make. A small number feel that communications are not good enough and that they are not informed well enough about their children's progress. Inspectors looked at these issues and found that communications are sound and that parents and carers receive detailed information about children's progress. They



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also have access to teachers at the start and end of the school day for further information if they require it.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Merebrook Infant 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 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 171 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	67	11	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	76	8	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	55	13	39	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	58	14	42	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	58	14	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	55	13	39	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	42	19	58	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)	19	58	15	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	48	16	48	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	33	16	48	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	33	20	61	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	55	14	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	76	8	24	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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



5 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Merebrook Infant School, Milton Keynes, MK4 1EZ

Thank you for making us so welcome. Those of you we spoke to gave us a good idea about what you think about your school. We judged the school as satisfactory, which means it does some things well but needs to improve in some areas.

- You make steady progress in your learning in Years 1 and 2, and good progress in Reception.
- Children in the Reception classes get off to a good start and learn lots through their activities indoors and out.
- Some teaching is good and it is improving, but there are a few areas where it needs to improve further.
- You like school, enjoy learning and behave well. You get on well together and you treat everyone kindly.
- You understand that it is important to eat healthily and take exercise, and most of you do.
- You take on responsibilities and raise money for several charities.
- The school looks after you well and you know you can ask anyone for help if you need it.

In order for the school to be even better, we have asked your teachers and governors to do three things.

- Improve how well you do by making sure you make choices about your learning, use your imagination more, and learn to write longer pieces of work.
- Make sure teaching is always challenging and that you know how well you are doing and what the next steps in your learning are.
- Make sure all adults working in the school are well informed about all school activities and all feel that what they do is worthwhile.

You can help by asking if you are not sure how well you are doing or how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley

Lead inspector

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