

# Merdon Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	115873
<b>Local authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379158
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Jacqueline Marshall

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>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	220
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nigel Lewis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Duncan Sergeant
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10–11 June 2009
<b>School address</b>	Merdon Avenue Chandler's Ford Eastleigh SO53 1EJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	02380 265255
<b>Fax number</b>	02380 270238
<b>Email address</b>	admin@merdon.hants.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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<b>Inspection number</b>	379158



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Jacqueline Marshall

Additional inspector

John Stewart

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, observing eight teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff, school leaders and representatives of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, policies, including those relating to safeguarding, data on pupils' progress, attendance figures and the school's improvement planning. They scrutinised pupils' work and evaluated 126 questionnaire responses received from parents and carers, 98 from a sample of pupils and 18 from staff.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized junior school. The pupils come from predominantly White British families as well as from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is average and represents a range of needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A very small minority of the pupils speak English as an additional language and, of these, only a few join speaking little or no English. In 2011, the school's results in national tests exceeded the government's expected minimum.

The school has achieved a number of awards. These include Healthy School status, Sports Active Mark, Arts Mark Silver Award and the Reading Connects Award. The school has two leading teachers working with the local authority, one specialising in drama, the other in art.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>

## Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- Achievement is inadequate because of the slow progress many pupils make in writing and mathematics.
- Improvements since the previous inspection in the use of assessment information, the quality and consistency of teaching and the impact of leadership and management on pupils' achievement have been inadequate and these issues remain key priorities for the school.
- Teaching over time has failed to provide sufficient pace and level of challenge for pupils to make adequate progress in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders, until recently, have not focused with sufficient rigour on monitoring how well individual pupils are making progress, or on the quality of their learning, in order to provide timely challenge and support to bring these pupils back on track. The lack of improvement since the previous inspection demonstrates that the school does not have the capacity for sustained improvement.
- Reading is promoted well throughout the school and, as a result, pupils make at least expected and often better progress, achieving above-average standards.
- The behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are good and the school's leaders are effective in ensuring that pupils are safe and secure.
- Pupils enjoy their time in the school and their attendance is high.
- The school enjoys strong and supportive relationships with parents and carers.

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

- Raise attainment in writing so that it matches that in reading and ensure pupils meet the levels expected for their age by:
  - using assessment information to plan lessons that are well matched to all pupils' abilities, particularly the most able
  - reminding pupils regularly as they are learning of their individual targets, as well as those for the whole lesson
  - developing teachers' marking so pupils understand exactly what to do to improve their work and know the next steps in their learning
  - providing greater opportunities for pupils to practise the skills they have learned in literacy lessons when writing in other subjects.
  
- Ensure pupils make at least the expected progress in English and mathematics by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what all pupils should be able to achieve
  - maintaining sufficient pace and challenge in lessons
  - checking pupils' progress regularly throughout the year so that underachieving pupils are identified quickly
  - intervening promptly in order to target support more effectively, especially for those pupils who are falling behind.
  
- Improve leaders' systematic monitoring and evaluation of the actions the school takes to remedy areas of weakness by:
  - ensuring improvement plans include rigorous measures of progress, tight deadlines and precise measures of success so that leaders can judge the progress the school is making
  - using assessment information effectively to set challenging targets for pupils' progress, eradicate underachievement and enable pupils to make good progress and achieve well.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Over time, pupils' attainment is broadly average. However, attainment in writing is weaker than in reading and mathematics. In reading, pupils reach above-average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. Parents and carers express a high level of satisfaction with the progress their children make and are appreciative of the efforts the school makes to involve them in their children's learning. Despite these comments, pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics, is inadequate because an above-average proportion of pupils fails to make the expected progress from their starting points. Over time, expectations of pupils' achievement have not been high enough or adjusted appropriately each year, even when some were falling behind. Consequently, underachievement in writing has built up, year on year, without being adequately tackled. Initiatives recently introduced have begun to address the issue and progress for some pupils has begun to

accelerate because of the targeted support they now receive in lessons. However, this improving picture is not yet sufficient or consistent enough to eradicate underachievement across the school and raise standards.

In some lessons and classes progress is better and sometimes good, though this is not a consistent feature. Where learning is best, tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities and they talk eagerly about what they have learnt. In a Year 6 lower set mathematics lesson pupils spoke about what strategies they would need to solve problems using multiples and factors. Working well collaboratively, pupils explained their reasoning while ensuring they used the correct mathematical vocabulary, showing resilience in concentrating on their work. However, in too many classes learning is not planned to match closely enough the differing abilities of each group or individual to enable all pupils, including the most able, to achieve sufficiently to make up lost ground. Those pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs make similar progress in lessons and over time to their peers. During intervention programmes that target their needs specifically, their progress accelerates as a result of the well-matched and focused support they receive.

### **Quality of teaching**

Although good teaching was observed in several lessons during the inspection, inadequate teaching over time has led to pupils making insufficient progress from their starting points. Teachers' understanding of the needs of individual pupils based on their prior attainment has been inconsistent. This is because teachers' expectations are not always high enough and work is not sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able. There has been a recent focus on the use of assessment information to better target pupils' learning in writing and mathematics. However, while there have been some improvements, pupils' progress has yet to improve significantly as a result.

While some teachers use assessment information well to plan and mark pupils' work this remains inconsistent across the school. Too often pupils of different abilities complete the same work or have targets which do not extend them. Opportunities to use targets effectively to help pupils to improve during lessons, and through teachers' marking, to know the next steps in their learning, are often missed. Consequently, while some pupils are unfamiliar with their targets, others were able to demonstrate to inspectors that they had already achieved theirs. Similarly, pupils are not always encouraged enough to transfer the skills they have been learning in their English lessons into their writing in other subjects, or to remember their targets whenever they write a piece of work. While most parents and carers commented positively about the quality of teaching in the school a few highlighted the lack of clarity in their children's targets and that this hampered the help they were able to give at home.

Relationships between pupils and adults are good because teachers plan interesting activities that engage and motivate them in their learning, such as the new topics from the recently introduced International Primary Curriculum (IPC). These activities also promote pupils' spiritual and cultural development well. The wide range of after-school activities, including the highly popular Musical Theatre Club, are much appreciated by pupils, parents and carers alike. One parent commented: 'My child

has always enjoyed attending school and talks positively about all aspects and loves all activities on offer.'

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The school's positive promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key factor in pupils' high attendance and good behaviour. Pupils respond well to the support of adults working with them, particularly in small target groups and on a one-to-one basis. Parents and carers praise the approach of teaching staff and additional adults alike, commenting 'teachers are always helpful' and 'find a range of ways to inspire' their children to learn.

Due to the school's leaders' effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils get on well together and show considerable support for one another, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils are keen to explain how they would deal with a range of types of bullying and know exactly who to turn to for help if they need to. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire commented positively on how the school deals with behaviour and a very large majority of pupils agreed that behaviour is good. Initiatives such as the Civic Awards, with a focus on school and community service, also contribute positively to pupils' good moral and social development and are highly regarded by the pupils. Similarly, pupils themselves refer to the IPC values, such as resilience, displayed in classrooms, in their answers and discussions.

### **Leadership and management**

Since the previous inspection, while some improvements have been made, leaders at all levels have not focused sufficiently rigorously on tackling the issue of pupils' slow progress or addressing the inconsistencies in teaching. Consequently, inconsistencies remain and too much teaching is inadequate. Leaders, including the governing body, have had too positive a picture of how well the school is doing. Through accurate analysis of data they have recently identified the extent of pupils' underachievement and begun to target these pupils' learning. However, there has not been enough time to eradicate inadequate progress or raise standards in writing to match those seen in reading. Despite very recent improvements to the analysis and evaluation of the school's performance the school is not yet in a position to sustain continuous improvement.

Day-to-day management of the school is efficient. Leaders have good relationships with pupils and parents and carers who express considerable satisfaction with the school. They have effectively focused on maintaining pupils' good behaviour while raising attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. At a personal level, pupils are treated equally and the school is free from discrimination. However, because of the lack of challenge for pupils, particularly the most able, and their consequent underachievement, equality of opportunity is inadequate overall. The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies that there are strengths in the curriculum, including reading and the Arts. However, the curriculum is inadequate because it is not sufficiently tailored to meet individuals' needs. As a result, too many pupils are failing to make the expected progress in writing and

mathematics. At the time of the inspection, leaders at all levels, and staff, were seen to play their part in ensuring that safeguarding procedures were adequately met.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



14 January 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Merdon Junior School, Eastleigh, SO53 1EJ**

Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work when we visited your school. We were pleased to learn from talking to you, and from your responses in the questionnaires you answered, that you like school. We agree that your teachers provide lots of extra activities that you enjoy and make you really keen to come to school. Your attendance is high – well done! We think your school gives you the right help so that you know how to behave well and keep safe.

We found that, although there are things to be pleased about with Merdon Juniors, it does need a lot of extra support in order to put right some of its weaknesses as it is not providing you with a satisfactory standard of education overall. It requires what Ofsted calls 'special measures' for this to happen. Inspectors will visit regularly to check the progress the school is making.

In order to make these improvements, we have asked the adults at your school to do a number of things.

- Make better use of your targets to help you understand how to improve your writing, have higher expectations of your writing skills, and give you lots of opportunities to practise writing in other subjects.
- Make sure lessons in English and mathematics are always challenging enough and you always know the next steps in learning to help you to improve.
- Check regularly to make sure all of you are making enough progress in learning and the school is doing as well as it should.

You can all help by continuing to respect others' values and always using the advice teachers give you on how to improve your work. Thank you again for helping us.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Marshall  
Lead inspector

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