

Merdon Junior School

Merdon Avenue, Eastleigh, SO53 1EJ

Inspection dates 9–10 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher shows ambition, determination and passion to improve the school.
- Senior leaders, subject leaders and staff have brought about considerable improvements to pupils' achievement and to teaching since the previous inspection.
- Governors have a clear overview of the school's performance and the improvements made. They provide strong support and appropriate challenge.
- A productive partnership has been established with parents. Parents rightly hold very positive views about the school and recognise the rapid improvements.
- Pupils show enthusiasm for learning. Their behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and attendance is well above average.
- The school promotes personal qualities and values which prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are honest, courteous and friendly and show respect for others.
- Procedures to ensure that pupils are safe are highly effective. Pupils feel safe and very well looked after by staff.
- Teaching is now good. It successfully engages pupils and promotes good progress.
- An interesting curriculum is enriched by a wide range of clubs and visits.
- Pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and attainment is above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils apply their reading and writing skills well in different subjects and topics.
- They use their numeracy skills very well to solve challenging and relevant problems in mathematics.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- At times, work is not set at the right level of difficulty for different groups of pupils, particularly for the most able.
- Occasionally, the purpose of the lesson is not clear enough and so not all pupils fully understand what they are expected to learn.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in all eight classes. Some lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and analysed the information about their attainment and progress.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other staff, a representative from the local authority, the governors, pupils and parents.
- The inspectors took account of the 86 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and correspondence from parents.
- Inspectors took account of 22 questionnaire returns from staff.
- A range of documents was examined, including school policies, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nicola Cale

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- A well below average proportion of disadvantaged pupils is eligible for the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2014, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher took up the post just before the previous inspection in 2013. Leaders of English and mathematics were both appointed to their posts in September that year. The deputy headteacher started work in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve on the already good teaching, so that more pupils make rapid progress, and further raise attainment by the end of Year 6 by:
 - ensuring that all work set is at the right level of difficulty for pupils, particularly the most able.
 - making sure that that all lessons have a sharp focus so that all pupils know what they are expected to learn.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The enthusiastic headteacher shows ambition, determination and passion to improve the school. She has worked relentlessly with key leaders and staff in raising pupils' achievement and improving teaching. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection.
- The headteacher has successfully created a positive school culture and ethos where pupils and teachers can learn and thrive. High expectations and continuous improvement are now part of the school's fabric. Pupils and staff are proud to be members of the school.
- Systems for assessing and checking the school's performance are effective. The headteacher and other leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas for improvement. Decisive action has been taken to bring about change since the previous inspection.
- Subject leadership is much improved since the previous inspection. The leadership of English, mathematics and special educational needs is securely good. These leaders carefully check pupils' progress and take positive steps to improve provision in their area of responsibility. For example, the leader of mathematics has provided regular training in numeracy for learning support assistants and they are now more effective in supporting pupils' learning in mathematics.
- The development of teaching has been a key priority on the school's road to improvement. Teaching is effectively checked by the headteacher and subject leaders. Support and training are provided to extend teachers' knowledge and skills. Newly qualified teachers receive good guidance, mentoring and support from colleagues. Teaching has improved to good because of the school's actions. However, leaders know that there are still elements of teaching to be strengthened.
- Arrangements for the performance management of teachers contribute well to improving practice. Targets set to improve teachers' performance are closely linked to pupils' progress and to priorities in the school improvement plan.
- Leaders and staff ensure that pupils are well behaved and are extremely safe at school. Safeguarding procedures are robust and fully meet government requirements. The school successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are enthusiastic learners; they show consideration and respect for others. Values such as curiosity, determination, honesty, respect, responsibility and tolerance are fostered successfully, so pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school's curriculum is well planned, interesting and promotes good achievement for pupils and contributes well to their personal development. Provision is now strong in reading, writing and mathematics. Furthermore, pupils have good opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of subjects. A wide range of additional clubs and visits extends pupils' learning and experiences. Residential visits to the New Forest and the Isle of Wight are popular. The school is at an early stage of developing a new assessment system to reflect national changes.
- The use of the pupil premium funding has been strengthened. Pupils in danger of falling behind are swiftly identified and well-targeted support is provided to accelerate their progress, especially in reading, writing and numeracy.
- The primary sport funding is used well to extend pupils' opportunities for sport and physical development. Specialist coaches provide good quality training to increase the skills of staff. Pupils participate in a wide range of additional sports clubs. They also take part, with considerable success, in local sports tournaments.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well and the school effectively tackles all forms of discrimination. All pupils have full access to the learning opportunities provided.
- The local authority has provided good advice, support and training to help the school improve. The primary phase inspector and advisers of English, mathematics and special needs have made a valuable contribution to increasing the skills of staff and raising pupils' achievement. The local authority knows the school well and has a clear overview of its performance.
- The school has established productive partnerships with parents. The results of the online survey, Parent View, indicate that parents hold positive views about the school. A number of parents wrote to the inspectors praising the school's ethos, the range of activities offered and the achievement of the pupils. The leadership of the headteacher and the improvements over the past two years receive particular praise. The findings of the inspection confirm the parents' positive views.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is effective.
 - Members of the governing body have high aspirations for the school and appreciate and recognise the improvements that the school has made.

- The governors analyse performance data and have a good understanding of pupils' attainment and progress.
- Governors have a clear view of the quality of teaching, which has improved because of the actions taken by senior leaders. They understand requirements relating to the management of teachers' performance, and ensure that promotion and salary increases are based on the progress that pupils make.
- Governors ensure that the pupil premium is used properly and check the impact of spending on pupils' achievement.
- The governors are very supportive of the school's leaders and staff and pupils. With a clearer understanding of the school's performance, they are able to challenge leaders and hold the school to account.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time at school and participate fully in the range of activities provided. Attendance levels are well above the national average.
- In lessons, pupils show an enthusiasm for learning. As well as the learning in lessons, they particularly enjoy the wide range of clubs and educational visits provided. Pupils informed the inspectors, 'Our topics are interesting.' 'We love learning new things.' 'The trips are great.'
- Pupils' presentation of their work has improved since the previous inspection. Most pupils take care and pride in their work and show sustained levels of concentration. As a result, presentation and written work are of a higher quality.
- Pupils behave well in the classroom, in the playground, the dining hall and around the school. The school's clear records of incidents indicate that behaviour is typically good.
- In some classes, pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are impeccable. Occasionally, a few pupils can be less positive in their attitudes and behaviour. However, any inappropriate behaviour is swiftly corrected and managed by staff so that it does not interfere with pupils' learning.
- Pupils are courteous, friendly, helpful and show consideration and respect for others. Through their studies, they show an appreciation and a sound understanding of different cultures and faiths.
- Pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities such as serving on the school council, being house captains, sports leaders and lunchtime monitors. They understand the importance of helping others who are less well off than themselves and raise funds for local, national and global charities.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The headteacher and staff take all possible steps to ensure that all pupils are well cared for, safe and protected.
- All the parents who completed the online survey, Parent View, stated that their child feels safe and is well looked after at school. Pupils reported to the inspectors that they felt safe at school and very well looked after by staff.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are clear. All staff have had recent training in safeguarding and child protection. Leaders and staff carry out regular risk assessments to ensure that pupils are safe at school and when they are on educational visits. The school buildings are safe and secure. The attractive grounds are well maintained. The headteacher and staff ensure that the school is a stimulating place where pupils can learn and thrive. The pupils remarked, 'This is a good place to be,' and, 'Our teachers take good care of us.'
- Discussions with pupils, records of incidents and parents' responses to Parent View indicate that there is very little bullying in the school. Pupils demonstrate a very clear understanding of bullying and the different forms it can take, including persistent name calling and cyber bullying. They told the inspectors that bullying in the school was very rare. They also stated that should any bullying occur it would be quickly sorted out.
- Pupils know to keep themselves safe at school, at home and on the roads. They show a good understanding of internet and e-safety when using computers.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has been strengthened since the previous inspection and is now good. The improvements to teaching are having a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement.
- Teaching enables all groups of pupils to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers establish positive relationships with pupils and manage them well. Pupils are attentive, cooperative and respond well to their teachers' clear instructions and explanations.
- Questioning is used skilfully to challenge pupils' thinking, explore their ideas and to check how well pupils have understood new learning. Pupils are articulate and clear in their responses.
- In most lessons, teachers use assessment information about pupils' attainment well to plan their teaching and to set suitably challenging work for different groups of pupils. Since the previous inspection, teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve and the levels of challenge. As a result, pupils are fully engaged in their learning and their interest is sustained. They make good gains in acquiring knowledge, deepening their understanding and developing skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well taught and supported. Learning support assistants are well deployed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly in developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- The marking of pupils work is effective and helps pupils to improve. Teachers provide suitable praise and encouragement for good work and constructive comments to guide them to the next stages of their learning.
- Teachers successfully promote enjoyment in reading by introducing pupils to a wide range of literature. Interesting novels and traditional stories are frequently used as a basis for pupils' own writing. Pupils apply their reading skills well when finding useful information for topic work.
- Writing is well taught. Teachers use demonstration and guidance successfully to help improve pupils' writing skills. They give good attention to the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to apply and extend their writing skills in subjects such as geography, history and science.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective, and often inspirational. Pupils are taught calculation skills and mathematical operations well. For example, pupils in Year 4 made good progress in solving multiplication problems after receiving clear demonstrations and explanations by their teachers.
- Challenging and relevant opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills to solve mathematical problems. For example, in a Year 6 group, pupils applied their knowledge and understanding of area and perimeter to design various sports court markings such as basketball and tennis for the school grounds. They also costed their project.
- At times, the work is not set at the right level of difficulty for the pupils, particularly for the most able. When this happens, pupils do not learn as well as they should because the work is too easy for them.
- Occasionally, the purpose of the lesson is not effectively shared with the class and so pupils are not entirely sure what they are expected to learn.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now good.
- Pupils' enter the school with above average attainment. Pupils' achievement required improvement after the previous inspection because pupils' progress was uneven throughout the school. Some groups, such as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, were not achieving as well as the others.
- In 2014, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 was above average in reading and writing, but closer to average in mathematics. This group of pupils has made good progress since the previous inspection. However, they did not make good progress in Years 3 and 4, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils' work, the school's assessments and the learning in lessons show that pupils are now making good progress in all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics. The current Year 6 pupils are on course to attain securely above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The achievement of the most able has improved. In 2014, an above average proportion of Year 6 pupils attained the higher National Curriculum levels in reading and writing. The proportion attaining the higher National curriculum levels in mathematics was only average. Improvements to teaching mean that the most able pupils are more effectively challenged and their learning better extended. In the current Year 6, above average proportions are on course to attain the higher National Curriculum levels in reading, writing and mathematics. However, occasionally in lessons the most able are not extended enough in their

learning.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are provided with learning activities well suited to their specific needs.
- In 2014, the attainment of Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium is not reported because the numbers were too low and individuals could be identified. Throughout the school, most pupils supported by the additional funding are making good progress. Gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates and other pupils nationally are closing.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. By Year 6, pupils acquire and apply the more advanced reading skills such as predication, inference and deduction. They interrogate different texts confidently to interpret their meaning. Pupils apply their reading skills effectively in topic work to gather useful information.
- Pupils achieve well in writing. They write high quality pieces for different purposes and in different styles. Grammar, punctuation and spelling are well developed. Handwriting is neat, fluent and letters are joined. Pupils' presentation has improved since the last inspection. Pupils apply their writing skills very well to different subjects. For example, pupils in Year 3 wrote clear factual accounts about the Amazon rainforest. They used their new knowledge well to write an Amazon adventure story.
- In mathematics pupils make good progress. They acquire essential knowledge, understanding and skills well. They use reasoning and apply their previous learning to solve challenging and relevant mathematical problems. For example, pupils in a Year 6 class made rapid progress in investigating solar energy. They calculated how much energy the school currently uses. They then worked out the cost of solar power and the savings that could be made. This work in mathematics was linked well to their science work on renewable energy.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	115873
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	462423

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carl Fergusson
Headteacher	Jo Walker
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 June 2013
Telephone number	02380 265255
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