

Merstham Primary School

London Road South, Redhill, Surrey RH1 3AZ

Inspection dates 24–25 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders, supported by an effective governing body, have brought about significant improvements since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and pupils make good progress.
- Teaching is typically good. Teachers know their pupils well and they plan lessons to build on what pupils already know. They provide imaginative experiences that inspire pupils and encourage them to work hard.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen sharply and are now broadly average. Pupils have made good progress in writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve equally as well as other pupils. This is due to the effective way in which leaders track their progress and intervene before they fall behind their classmates.
- Pupils enjoy school. They feel happy and safe and they behave well. They have positive attitudes to learning and they settle quickly to their work.
- The curriculum provides enriching experiences that contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is enhanced by a good range of after-school clubs that add to pupils' enjoyment of school.
- The restructured leadership team provide a clear direction to the work of the school. They have built a strong team of teachers who share their vision and ambition.
- Governors have reviewed the way in which they work and now provide a greater and more professional challenge to school leaders. They hold the leadership to account for the school's performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The early years requires improvement because recent improvements have not been sustained.
- Communication is inconsistent. Leaders do not always provide information in a timely manner.
- The school's website is not fully compliant with statutory requirements.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to read and develop good reading habits in their day-to-day learning and so pupils make slower progress in reading than in other subjects.
- The presentation of work in pupils' books is often untidy and does not reflect the good quality of which they are capable.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision and outcomes for children in the early years.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that a higher proportion is typically outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to read and develop good reading habits in their day-to-day learning
 - providing more challenge for the most-able pupils and insisting that all pupils always present their work to the highest possible standard.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - improving both written and verbal communications systems to make information readily available for all stakeholders, including parents
 - ensuring that the school's website is fully compliant with statutory requirements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The new leadership team provides a clear vision and direction to the work of the school. Leaders have brought about significant improvements to the school so that pupils achieve well. Leaders are ambitious and have created a strong team who are enthusiastic and keen to secure further improvement.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and they know what needs most to be improved. They take the views of all staff and governors into account when setting priorities for improvement and so everyone understands the role they play in achieving the school's aims. School leaders have addressed the issues for improvement from the previous inspection and are well placed to continue to improve.
- Leaders are aware that previous improvements in the early years have not been sustained. They are currently working alongside staff to bring about improvements but it is too soon to see the impact of this work.
- One of the key successes is the improvement to teaching. This has been brought about by training and mentoring staff to help them to improve their skills. Leaders have worked in close cooperation with advisers from the local authority to improve teachers' subject knowledge and to help them with planning and assessment. Previously weaker teaching has been fully addressed.
- School leaders regularly check teaching to see that school policies are being followed. They visit classrooms both formally and informally and offer feedback to help staff to progress further. This links to the school's systems to manage the performance of teachers and to set challenging targets. Teachers understand that their progression on the salary scale links closely to their performance in the classroom.
- Staff provide good role models for pupils by treating them with respect. They make sure that all pupils are treated equally and that discrimination on any grounds is not tolerated. Information is used well by staff to identify those pupils who are potentially at risk of falling behind. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils learn at least as well as other pupils and also because the additional funding is used effectively to provide help for them in the classroom.
- Although school leaders keep necessary records and documentation relating to all aspects of the school's work, these are not always stored and filed systematically or efficiently. Consequently, it is not always easy to retrieve the required information and this can affect communications between the school and other agencies and stakeholders.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and subjects are taught together under an overall theme or topic to increase pupils' understanding of links between subjects. Often topics start with a class book to stimulate pupils' interest and imagination. The school teaches the full range of subjects required by the National Curriculum. There are increased opportunities for pupils to use information technology (IT) as part of their day-to-day learning.
- Rich and imaginative experiences add to pupils' enjoyment of school. For example, pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 visited London to see 'The Lion King.' Pupils in Year 5 enjoyed a residential visit to Scarborough. These types of experiences promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils learn about British values by studying historical events such as the signing of the Magna Carta and by taking part in activities that promote democracy and respect for each other. This helps to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain
- Pupils enjoy physical education and games and make good progress in developing their skills. This is because school leaders have used the additional sports funding to train staff and to provide specialist coaching in games and gymnastics. As a result staff are more confident and pupils take part successfully in local schools' sporting events.
- The majority of parents who completed the online survey and who spoke to inspectors were positive about the school. However, some reported that they did not always receive enough information about what happens in school or how well their children are doing. Inspectors found that communications were not as good as they should be and that there were omissions on the school's website of some statutory information.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have reviewed their own working practices and now provide an effective level of challenge to school leaders. They have carried out an audit of their own skills so that they can recruit new governors to fill in any remaining gaps. Governors have been fully involved in creating the school improvement plan and so they are well informed about the school's priorities. They visit school

regularly, usually linked to a developmental priority. This provides them with a wide range of information to monitor how well the school is doing.

- Governors established a data group and following training, they have a good understanding of information relating to pupils' learning and progress. They know that school leaders have addressed previously weaker teaching and that they continue to provide support and training to help teachers to continue to develop their skills. They supported the headteacher in re-structuring the leadership team.
- Governors know that the additional funding allocated to support disadvantaged pupils has been used effectively to ensure that they achieve as well as other pupils.
- Governors ensure that they fulfil most their statutory responsibilities. However, they have not checked to see if the information provided on the school's website meets statutory requirements. They manage finances well to ensure that the school budget is spent wisely and that the school provides good value for money.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Four designated members of staff have been trained on safeguarding procedures. All adults who visit school are carefully checked and are fully informed about what to do in the event of a concern being raised about a pupil.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers have responded positively to the help and support they have received from school leaders to become confident practitioners. They have established good working relationships with pupils and they teach lessons that inspire and engage them.
- Teachers make sure that that pupils understand what they are expected to learn. Teachers have good subject knowledge and know exactly what activities will help pupils to consolidate their skills. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils were learning how to use personification when writing poetry. After pupils wrote their poems and read them aloud, they used plasticine to create models that they used to create a computer animation of their personified characters.
- Teachers know their pupils well and they plan work that is pitched at the right level for them. Teachers use questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding and ensure that they progress well in reasoning and deepening their understanding. This was particularly effective in a Year 4 mathematics lesson in which pupils were learning how to subtract three-digit numbers using the most efficient method. They had to choose a method and explain clearly why it was effective.
- Pupils are confident learners who are not afraid to make mistakes. This is because teachers use misunderstandings as teaching points and this helps pupils to progress well. Trained teaching assistants provide pupils who have special educational needs or disability with help in class and so these pupils learn as well as their classmates.
- Although teachers have high expectations and expect them to work hard in class, they do not always insist that pupils present their work to the highest possible standard. Work in pupils' books is often messy, with poor handwriting that goes unchecked by teachers. There are too few opportunities for pupils to make choices about how they record their work. This prevents them from developing good learning behaviours including independence, resilience and perseverance.
- Teachers assess pupils' learning throughout lessons by asking pertinent questions to check on pupils' understanding. Teachers provide pupils with detailed comments informing pupils how they can improve their work. Pupils usually respond to these' comments by correcting and improving their work. However, this practice is not consistent in all classes.
- Pupils in most classes receive regular homework. Often this is a project linked to the current class topic. For example, pupils in Year 4 created some delightful plants and animals from junk metal to link with their topic 'The Tin Forest'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school is admitting an increasing number of pupils who have additional needs and whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. They work in close cooperation with external agencies to ensure that these pupils receive the right support.

- School leaders are mindful of the need to help pupils stay safe outside school. They have provided pupils with guidance about how to stay safe on roads and when near water. Pupils understand that tobacco and some non-medicinal drugs can be harmful. Consequently, pupils feel well supported and know that adults are on hand to help should problems arise. One pupil told inspectors, 'It isn't a perfect school, but they get it right most of the time.'
- Pupils understand about different forms of bullying but say that it rarely happens. They know about dangers associated with modern technology and that they should never divulge personal information when using the internet.
- Pupils are confident and they are proud of their school. They talk enthusiastically about the additional opportunities they have to take part in visits and trips. Older pupils enjoy the extra responsibilities they have, including taking care of younger pupils at lunchtimes.
- The school works closely with the local authority educational welfare officer to encourage good attendance. However, a small minority of pupils do not attend school regularly and on time. The school is working closely with the education welfare officer to address this.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and so pupils understand the expectations for their behaviour. They respond respectfully to staff and lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are friendly and enjoy chatting to visitors about their school. In class, they readily help each other without prompting. This shows how well the school promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils get on very well together regardless of background. They say disagreements are rare but that adults or other pupils are on hand to help them to resolve issues. Pupils say name-calling is not allowed and that discrimination on any grounds is not tolerated. They agree that they are treated fairly and equally.
- In lessons, pupils' behaviour is good. They listen both to teachers and each other and readily praise each other's efforts. Pupils quickly respond to teachers' instructions and so lessons get off to a prompt start. In the few lessons where activities are not inspiring, pupils lose interest and show signs of boredom and do not take part in learning.
- Pupils move around the school safely and sensibly. There are plenty of activities for them at breaktimes and rotas are well organised, allowing pupils to play safely. Lunchtimes are sociable occasions. Pupils eat sensibly and made healthy choices when selecting their meals.
- The majority of parents who responded to the online survey or who spoke to inspectors agreed that their children are happy and safe and that behaviour at school is good. Staff and governors supported this view.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They work hard in lessons and make good progress to reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Current performance information held by the school shows that in most classes pupils are on course to make at least expected progress from their starting points. There are no significant differences in the achievement of girls and boys.
- The school has been particularly successful in closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged and other pupils. Leaders have used the additional funding effectively to provide good support to eligible pupils. Consequently they attain at least as well, and sometimes better, than other pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability achieve well. Teaching assistants are well trained and work closely with teachers to help those pupils who have additional learning needs. Sometimes the support is provided in class, while at other times pupils are provided with specific programmes of work to help them overcome their difficulties.
- An increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language are joining the school part way through the year. School leaders have reacted quickly to provide support to meet the needs of these pupils. Consequently, these pupils quickly learn English and make good progress.
- While good questioning by teachers helps the most-able pupils deepen their understanding in lessons, the work provided for them is not always as hard as it should be. Consequently, the most-able pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable.

- Pupils write fluently, confidently and with enjoyment. Teachers have improved the way in which they teach writing and so pupils have developed a wide vocabulary to write with a real sense of purpose. Pupils write in literacy lessons and other subjects, thus practising their skills routinely and helping them to progress well.
- Mathematics lessons are well planned and provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to solve real-life problems. They enjoy manipulating numbers and investigating number patterns and this helps them to make good progress. Teachers mostly challenge pupils well and require them to reason and to think deeply and so improve their knowledge and understanding of mathematics.
- Standards in reading have improved at Key Stage 1. In the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) screening check, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard has more than doubled in the past three years so that it is now broadly average. At the end of Year 2 in 2015, pupils' attainment was significantly above average. Pupils currently in Year 2 enjoy reading and happily share their books and talk about their favourite characters.
- Although pupils in Year 6 enjoy reading, their progress has not been as strong as it has been in writing and mathematics. This is because there are too few opportunities for them to read books often and widely in their day-to-day learning.
- Pupils make good progress in other subjects. For example, they use information technology (IT) proficiently to support their learning in English and mathematics and there are some good examples of where they have designed and made models in design technology lessons. Pupils thoroughly enjoy physical education (PE) and show skills in gymnastics and games. The quality of pupils' singing is high.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Improvements made to the provision and outcomes for children in the early years since the previous inspection have not been sustained despite support and guidance provided by leaders. This has largely been due to significant staff changes that have slowed the momentum as new staff join the team, some on a temporary basis.
- The headteacher is leading the early years in the absence of the permanent leader. Although she has a good overview and knows what needs to be improved, circumstances beyond her control have hampered developments. Towards the end of the summer term the school had to deal with an unexpected increase in the number of children in the reception year, many of who arrived at school part way through the autumn term. This impacted on accommodation, staffing, resources and planning because leaders did not always know when new children would join the school.
- Children enter Nursery and Reception with skills that are broadly average and they make adequate progress that prepares them for Year 1. They make better progress in reading and mathematics than they do in writing. This is because there are too few opportunities for them to learn to form letters correctly and staff do not always provide enough guidance to help them.
- Children feel happy and safe in both Nursery and Reception but their behaviour is not good because there are times when they run about without taking due care of other children. In class, under direct supervision, they respond to teachers' instructions but they have not all developed independence to make the right choices.
- Children make good progress when being taught directly by teachers. For example, in a phonics lesson, children learned how to blend sounds together to make and spell words. They then practised writing these words to reinforce spelling. However, during learning activities chose for themselves, they lacked guidance and structure and too many children spent too long without adult intervention to develop their learning.
- While there is an appropriate balance of activities that take place indoors and outside, the choices can be overwhelming for young children. Areas to reflect the different aspects of learning are not well defined and so the purpose of activities is not always clear.
- Children have settled well and they get on well together. They share and take turns and listen to each other. They are confident and have developed good social skills. Staff know children well and they provide good support to those who need additional help.
- Parents contribute to children's learning journeys and they have opportunities to 'stay and play' and this gives them a flavour of how well their children are learning.

School details

Unique reference number	124989
Local authority	Surry
Inspection number	10002305

This inspection 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	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ed Tomlin
Headteacher	Nina Saunders
Telephone number	01737 643978
Website	www.merstham.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info@merstham.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school is about the same size as the average-sized primary school. It is a one form of entry school although there are currently two classes in Year 5, owing to the need for additional places within the community.
- Children in the early years are taught in one Nursery and two Reception classes. Children attend Nursery in the mornings only and they attend full time when they are in the Reception year.
- There is a much higher number of boys than girls in some classes.
- A smaller than usual proportion of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding. This is additional funding provided by the government to support those pupils who are entitled to free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- About a quarter of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, which is a little below the national average. A lower than average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, although the number of these pupils in the school is increasing.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' learning and progress.
- There have been significant changes to the leadership team since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in 16 lessons, six of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. They looked at work in pupils' books and they attended one assembly. They listened to pupils reading in Year 2 and Year 6. They observed pupils' behaviour in class, in the playground and as they moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, teachers and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors met with three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Two groups of pupils met formally with inspectors and other pupils were spoken to at lunchtimes.
- Among the documents viewed were plans showing how the school intends to develop further, records relating to pupils' learning and progress and minutes from governors' meetings. Documents showing how the school keeps pupils safe in school were scrutinised.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing the 54 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also spoke informally to parents during the inspection. The views of staff were considered by taking into account 15 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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