

Merrydale Infant School

Claydon Road, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 0PL

Inspection dates

7–8 February 2017

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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides clear leadership and direction, whilst being approachable and supportive. This approach has helped to establish a school that is valued by parents, appreciated by staff and where pupils feel safe and happy.
- Pupils like coming to school. They behave well and are eager to learn. The attendance of the large majority has improved since the previous inspection. A few are still frequently absent.
- The governing body provides strong support for school leaders and has a good range of skills and experience.
- Senior staff provide strong support for the headteacher. They are working well together to improve and develop teaching further.
- The children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle quickly into the well-organised routines for their day.
- The children in the Nursery and Reception classes understand the importance of good behaviour. They are making good progress, especially in their understanding and use of letters and numbers.
- Lessons are planned well and teaching assistants often make a strong contribution to learning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making consistently good progress and they receive good support.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are making rapid progress in learning English and they do well at school.
- The school promotes British values strongly. The strong ethos of the school helps pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures to get on well with each other.
- Pupils are developing secure skills in mathematics and can perform a wide range of calculations with confidence.
- Pupils are increasingly skilled at sounding out letters and phrases accurately. This aspect of learning has improved significantly over the last three years because leaders have introduced new and effective systems.
- A few pupils in key stage 1 are not clear about the meaning of things they read, even though their skills in sounding out words are secure.
- Pupils are developing good skills in writing as soon as they start at school. Their work is often well presented and neat.
- Most of the pupils who are disadvantaged are making good progress, especially in the Nursery and Reception classes. A few do less well in key stage 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management further by:
 - ensuring that the disadvantaged pupils who are falling behind in key stage 1 receive more effective support, in order that they catch up with their peers
 - continuing to focus strongly on improving the attendance of pupils who regularly miss school
 - continuing to check that a reasonable proportion of pupils achieve greater depth in their learning.
- Improve teaching further by:
 - developing pupils' understanding of texts more effectively, especially for those pupils in key stage 1 who achieved lower outcomes at the end of the Reception Year
 - providing additional support and guidance for children in the Nursery and Reception classes in order to develop their skills in talking and listening to each other during informal learning activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher provides clear leadership and direction for the school. His friendly and informal approach is appreciated by staff, pupils and parents. His influence is creating a strong ethos, where pupils feel safe and happy.
- Staff support the headteacher well. This has enabled the school to cope effectively during a recent period, when some senior leaders have been absent. Strong teamwork has helped the school to function smoothly, despite these absences.
- Leaders are very aware of their local context and deal sensitively with the wide range of backgrounds and cultures of the pupils. The school is ambitious for all groups to do well and pupils respond positively to this approach.
- The headteacher, supported by other staff, has focused on ensuring that teaching improves. Careful checks on lessons and the quality of pupils' work have led to an analysis of strengths and areas that need to improve further. School leaders are not afraid to challenge staff who might need to do better. Any additional support and training provided are effective and staff are working well together to develop their skills further.
- Pupils are given sufficient time to practise their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. They also have the chance to study a wide range of other subjects, mainly through particular topics covered in all year groups. The school provides pupils with good opportunities to participate in additional clubs and trips that support their learning.
- The school has a strong ethos and culture. British values form a key part of several lessons and assemblies. Pupils have the opportunity to learn about a wide range of religions and they develop a strong sense of what is right and wrong. The positive relationships developed throughout the school are key to the strong culture of trust, tolerance and respect that is a key feature of the school.
- Staff with responsibility for subjects, or other aspects of the school, are making a good contribution to further improvement. They help to check on the progress of pupils, contribute strongly to effective planning and help each other with planning.
- The arrangements to manage behaviour are very effective. From the moment they start school, the pupils comply with the clearly communicated expectations.
- Since the previous inspection, school leaders have made improving attendance a priority. The overall attendance of pupils is better now, although a few pupils are still regularly absent. The systems used to promote good attendance have been strengthened. They include the use of rewards for good attendance, regular reminders to parents about the importance of attendance and its effect on learning, as well as the use of warning notices for persistent poor attendance.
- The local authority has provided 'light-touch' monitoring of the school. School leaders are starting to work in a partnership of three local schools in order to share ideas and resources. This is at an early stage of development.

Governance of the school

- The governing body provides strong support for school leaders. Governors have ensured that they receive additional training in order to keep their skills up to date. Governors give additional time to visit the school and gain first-hand knowledge of what is happening. They check on the performance of staff, including the headteacher, carefully and use this information to review decisions about pay. The governing body has a good awareness of the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for the sport premium. Although governors have checked the use of this funding, they understand that they could have provided more challenge to senior leaders where it has not led to a few pupils doing well enough. Governors have received additional training in how to ensure that children stay safe in school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders carry out careful checks on the qualifications and suitability of staff.
- The school site is organised so that it is safe and secure. Checks ensure that visitors to school are appropriate.
- Staff have received additional training to raise their awareness of safeguarding risks. They understand how they would report any concerns they might have about the welfare of a child.
- The strong culture of care and respect is a feature of the school and helps the pupils to feel safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach. Careful checks provide them with information about the learning of pupils. For example, regular use of small whiteboards allows many teachers to check the understanding of skills quickly and adjust teaching accordingly.
- Good planning helps pupils to receive strong support from teaching assistants, who often provide strong support for small groups. This enables those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress.
- The teaching of phonics is organised well, with a consistent approach used across the school. This aspect of teaching has been reorganised and developed. Staff have developed a good level of confidence and skill. This has led to improved outcomes for pupils over the last three years.
- A good level of consistency in teaching is helping to develop writing well across the different year groups. This has been a priority for much of this year, with staff concentrating on encouraging pupils to talk about their ideas before writing them down, in order to encourage them to write at length and with imagination. Pupils are using their writing skills well in a range of subjects, through studying topics such as 'animal planet'.

- Pupils routinely make sure that their work is neat. Most are developing neat handwriting because they practise their skills regularly.
- Pupils have the chance to read a good range of books and texts. Careful records help staff to keep track of the progress made. Some of the pupils who did not achieve the expected level at the end of the Reception Year need more support to help them with these skills because although they are able to sound out words accurately, they often do not have sufficient understanding of what the words mean.
- Mathematics is taught well. Across the school, pupils practise their calculation skills with enthusiasm and often use 'number lines' to help them understand important concepts. They are developing a high level of confidence and many say that they enjoy mathematics.
- The expectations for behaviour are consistent and clear across different classrooms. Pupils will try hard, even if they find something difficult, because they have a strong sense of pride in their work.
- Teachers assess work regularly and accurately. Pupils receive helpful feedback on how to improve their learning. Many respond by correcting mistakes, or trying something again, in order to get better at it.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils consider a variety of topics and issues about the world in assemblies and in personal and social education sessions during lessons. These activities help pupils to develop a good understanding of life outside their immediate context, and make a good contribution to how pupils get on with each other in school.
- Pupils feel comfortable with the diverse nature of their local area and the different backgrounds and cultures represented. Their response to this is a strength of the provision at the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils consistently behave well in lessons. The large majority are punctual at the start of the school day. They settle down quickly after breaks and are ready to start work quickly.
- Pupils play sensibly and enthusiastically with the equipment provided for them during lunchtime. They get on well with each other and say that they feel safe during play. They comment that bullying is not something they are worried about, although they also understand that sometimes people do fall out with each other.
- During lessons, pupils try hard and maintain their concentration very well, even when they find some things hard. In some sessions, where they spend a long time on something, they keep their focus and attention going and participate in activities well.

- A greater proportion of pupils are attending school regularly. Regular reminders in assemblies and school newsletters are having a positive effect. A few still do not come to school as often as they should. This is especially the case for some disadvantaged pupils and a few who are taken on extended holiday trips, even though school leaders do not give their approval.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The large majority of pupils currently in the school are making good progress from their starting points across a range of different subjects. Most pupils are ready and prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Across the school, most pupils are now making good progress and achieving more secure skills, especially in writing and mathematics. A good proportion of pupils in Year 2 are currently on track to achieve greater depth (the higher level of attainment for this year group) at the end of this year.
- Pupils are making good progress across a wide range of subjects, within topics and additional lessons focused on art, music and physical education.
- An increasing proportion of pupils have good skills in sounding out letters and reading words. They are able to do so confidently and they practise these skills regularly. The proportion achieving the expected standard in the national Year 1 phonics check has risen sharply over the last three years, although it still remains below average.
- Although pupils are able to use their skills in sounding out words with increasing confidence, some do not have a good understanding of the texts they are reading. This is especially the case for the pupils who were less secure at the end of the Reception Year.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are receiving a good level of additional support in lessons and sometimes before lessons. This is helping them to make consistently good progress.
- The most able pupils are currently achieving well. They often have the chance to tackle tasks that are more difficult, and some are currently on track to achieve greater depth at the end of key stage 1.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving. Although leaders ensure that they check the progress of these pupils regularly, and this is leading to better progress for many, some of the additional support provided is not effective enough. It is not always as focused as it needs to be and a few pupils are falling behind in key stage 1.
- In 2016, the proportion who achieved the expected standard in the key stage 1 national tests was below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Although no pupils achieved greater depth in the 2016 national tests, current pupils are doing better.
- Pupils started Year 1 with attainment that was below average. Those who had reached the expected standard at the end of the Reception Year made good progress in reading and writing and progress in mathematics was about average.

Early years provision

Good

- Children start in the Nursery class with skills and experience that are below average. They very quickly settle into the well-organised routines provided for them. This enables them to learn and play happily with the good range of resources.
- The early years provision is led well. Staff have a good understanding of the atmosphere they want to achieve and receive good additional training and support to help them with planning and assessment. The provision is safe, secure and welcoming.
- During the first few weeks of children's time in the Nursery and Reception classes, accurate assessments are made. Extensive 'learning journeys' provide a rich range of information about their achievements and learning. Parents have good opportunities to look at these and make comments.
- The links with parents are especially effective. This helps the children to settle quickly. Parents who spoke to inspectors said that they feel confident about the provision made for their children.
- Children make good progress across almost all areas of their learning and development. The proportion reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has improved steadily over the last three years, although it is still below average. Disadvantaged children keep up with their peers.
- Children get on well with each other. They behave well when taught in a large group and are able to maintain this good behaviour when playing and exploring activities in small groups.
- Despite this positive behaviour, some children, especially boys, do not communicate with each other well during informal learning activities and play. They are sometimes not encouraged, or supported, to do so by adults. This contributes to some of these children making less progress in developing their speech and language.

School details

Unique reference number	120023
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10023184

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Surtees
Headteacher	Mark Tipple-Johnson
Telephone number	0116 2767593
Website	www.merrydale-inf.leicester.sch.uk
Email address	office@merrydale-inf.leicester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 March 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and the proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language are both above average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 20 part-lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors met parents and carers, groups of pupils, two members of the governing body and staff with specific responsibilities for subjects or aspects of the school.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and checked a wide range of work across all year groups and subject areas.
- Inspectors took account of the 156 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- They looked at the school's checks on pupils' progress, self-evaluation of effectiveness and external reports provided by the local authority.
- Inspectors checked minutes of meetings of the governing body and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

David Bray, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Green	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Waldron	Ofsted Inspector
Dorothy Stenson	Ofsted Inspector

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M1 2WD

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