



Merdon Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115873
LEA Hampshire LEA
Inspection number 296445
Inspection dates 13 July 2006 to 14 July 2006
Reporting inspector Hilary Bonser AI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Merdon Avenue
School category	Community		Chandler's Ford
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Eastleigh SO53 1EJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02380265255
Number on roll	272	Fax number	02380270238
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Sara Goodhead
Date of previous inspection	11 May 2004	Headteacher	Mr Duncan Sergeant

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is similar in size to many primary schools. The majority of pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has risen this year and is slightly above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and very few are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Standards on entry to the school are generally above average. There has been a high turnover of teachers in the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school is no longer underachieving. Inspectors agree with the school's view that it now provides a good education for its pupils and good value for money. Rigorous and effective action in response to the previous report has already resulted in considerable improvement in pupils' achievement which is now good overall. It also shows the school's capacity for further improvement. A key factor has been the accuracy with which the school now identifies and tackles its weaknesses. This is underpinned by the highly effective tracking of pupils' progress, which enables teachers to see exactly which pupils need additional support or challenge.

Significant improvements in the planning of the curriculum and in the quality of teaching, which are now good, help pupils to make good progress overall in their learning. However, their rate of progress varies between year groups. The relatively new staff team has worked hard and generally successfully to establish a common approach to teaching and learning, although a few inconsistencies remain that hinder the learning of some pupils. As a result of very effective school action this year, pupils across the school have made rapid progress in reading. Well focused plans are in place for the coming year to tackle aspects of mathematics and writing where pupils are not improving as quickly.

Pupils' personal development is good. They are cared for and supported well and the excellent range of additional activities that so many of them enjoy adds to their positive attitudes to school and encourages their good behaviour and attendance.

What the school should do to improve further

andmiddot; Increase pupils' rate of progress in writing and mathematics to match that in reading.

andmiddot; Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good across the school to ensure that pupils make even progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Performance in the Year 6 national tests in 2005 showed a significant improvement from 2004, especially in English, where results were high. This year in Year 6, very clear tracking information shows that pupils have made particularly good progress from their starting points in September. Standards remain above average, but they are not as high as last year. This reflects differences in the proportions of more able pupils and those with learning difficulties in the two groups.

Since the last report, rigorous tracking of pupils' progress towards individual National Curriculum targets has been introduced. As a result of this and better planning, teaching and learning, the rate of progress has improved in all year groups. Boys and girls of all abilities now achieve at least satisfactorily and most achieve well overall in relation

to their prior attainment, meeting the challenging targets set by the school. Effective school action has already led to higher standards in reading and science. Progress in writing and mathematics has improved over the last two years but is inconsistent between year groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of the effective support of the special needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is good. They mainly behave well in lessons and although their attitude to work varies it is usually good. Pupils feel safe in school and give good support to each other through the buddy system. Pupils have a very good understanding of healthy living and the importance of exercise. Many enjoy putting this into practice by taking part in the wide variety of sporting activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy learning about other religions, celebrate festivals such as Passover and have good links with a school in South Africa. There is an effective school council who take their responsibilities very seriously. They say, 'It is important to make the school a better place'. They have had the toilets refurbished and secured new water fountains. Most are very proud of their involvement in community events and organising and managing stalls at the school fair. These activities, alongside their good basic skills, prepare them well for their future economic well being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, but variable across year groups. In all lessons, teachers manage pupils well, make good use of paired and group work and promote good relationships. This ensures pupils generally behave well, share ideas and have good attitudes to their work.

In good lessons, teachers' planning is detailed and work is well matched to pupils' differing learning needs, ensuring a good rate of progress for all. Questioning and explanations are used well to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding and this, coupled with a brisk pace, motivates pupils to learn and engages their interest. In an outstanding lesson, the teacher's excellent planning, challenging tasks and very good rapport with the pupils enabled them to be highly focused and attentive, thus ensuring a high rate of learning.

Teachers generally evaluate lessons and assess the progress of groups well to plan the next steps in their learning. However, on the few occasions where teaching is only satisfactory, this is because teachers do not use this information sharply enough to

meet the needs of all learners, so that the pace of learning is slowed for a few pupils, especially in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs well overall. Developments in the last two years have made a strong contribution to pupils' improved achievement. Work is well planned, especially in English, where it promotes progressive learning very well. However, not enough use is made of opportunities in other subjects to extend pupils' writing skills. Setting arrangements in English and mathematics provide more appropriate challenge for pupils of all abilities, although tasks are sometimes not pitched at the right level in mathematics. Planning for information and communication technology promotes the systematic development of skills and makes effective links with other subjects. Provision for different groups of pupils has improved. There are increasing opportunities to challenge gifted and talented pupils. The curriculum is enriched very well by a wide range of visits and visitors, which extends pupils' learning well. Extra-curricular provision is outstanding and makes a considerable contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school and their personal development. Many pupils take part in the large number of sporting and musical activities as well as those such as chess, Fiction Fanatics and Musical Theatre.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school provides a friendly, caring environment where pupils thrive. There is good attention to individual needs. Pupils are confident that their teachers will listen to them if they have any worries. There are few incidences of bullying or racism and pupils feel that these are dealt with effectively by the school. Close links with carers, the local authority and outside agencies ensure effective support and care for vulnerable pupils and promote all aspects of pupils' development. Procedures for child protection, risk assessments for school trips and health and safety checks are thorough and ensure that pupils are safe. Through its effective provision of a wide range of sporting activities and events, as well as a good focus on healthy eating, the school ensures pupils have a very active and healthy lifestyle. The school uses information from tests very well to track pupils' progress and set challenging targets for learning. Pupils know what their individual targets are, although they are not always used well to help them improve, especially in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The good leadership of the headteacher, who is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides a clear sense of direction that is fully focused on raising achievement and standards. Over the last two years there has been a rigorous and accurate process of self-evaluation that takes

account of the views of the whole school community. From this, well planned priorities have been identified and implemented successfully. These have already resulted in considerable increase in pupils' progress since the last report and the elimination of underachievement. There have been significant improvements in response to the previous key issues in planning the curriculum, assessment and the quality of teaching and learning. The school shows good capacity for further improvement

The effectiveness of school action is carefully monitored for its effect on pupils' achievement through clear and comprehensive tracking of their progress in English and mathematics. Subject co-ordinators and other key managers are now more involved in the detailed monitoring of planning and pupils' learning. However, they do not have regular opportunities to extend their overview and effectiveness by observing lessons to follow up identified variations in progress. Governors are increasingly well informed through their monitoring activities. They question, contribute to and support the work of the school effectively.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

I am writing to let you know what we found out when we visited your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you at work and at playtimes and were pleased to talk to you. There are lots of things we like about your school.

We liked these things the most: • You behave well, work hard and enjoy your lessons and playtimes. • You enjoy an excellent range of activities at lunchtimes and after school. • The school makes sure that you each have the kind of help you need to help you do well. • The school provides interesting and exciting things for you to do and looks after you well. • You understand the importance of eating the right things and taking plenty of exercise very well. • The school listens to you when you suggest how things could get even better. • Your teachers are good at helping you to learn new things and making sure you are getting on well.

We have asked your teachers to: • Help you to do even better in writing and mathematics. • Give all of you work that really makes you think, especially in mathematics. Thank you again

Yours sincerely

Hilary Bonser

Lead Inspector