

Inspection of a good school: Merrydale Infant School

Claydon Road, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 0PL

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 September 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Merrydale Infant School is a warm and welcoming school. Pupils are happy and confident. Pupils care about each other and know that adults care about them.

Pupils behave well. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and positive. Pupils are confident that adults will listen to their worries and help them resolve any concerns they may have. Pupils said that they feel safe. Pupils said that bullying is rare, and when it does happen adults deal with it quickly.

Playtimes are sociable occasions. Pupils make good use of the resources that are available to them, including the nature areas, the climbing frames, and the ball court. A new set of bikes are particularly popular. Pupils are happy and enjoy playing together.

Children in Reception and Nursery classes learn in spaces designed to develop their independence. Adults are skilled in promoting children's language development. They provide rich opportunities for children to explore the world around them, from learning in the woodland area to making cakes in the mud kitchen. Children are busy, concentrate hard and get on well together.

Leaders and teachers know pupils well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers use this knowledge to help pupils in lessons. They know when and how to make adaptations so that all pupils can access the curriculum.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum has been designed to develop skills as pupils move through school. However, leaders have not yet identified the key knowledge that they want pupils to know

in each year group and subject. As a result, the curriculum is not clearly sequenced and coherent. Subject leaders cannot be sure that pupils have learned the key knowledge.

Learning to read is a high priority at the school. The phonics programme is well structured. It makes clear which sounds pupils should learn throughout the Reception Year and key stage 1. Effective training has resulted in the phonics curriculum being implemented well, despite it being new to the school. Adults are confident in their use of pure sounds and quickly identify pupils' misconceptions. The books that pupils read are closely matched to the sounds that they know. Over time, pupils read a wide range of texts and genres. Teachers read to pupils regularly. This helps foster a love of reading.

Leaders ensure that pupils experience a range of trips and events which prepare them for the next stage of their lives. For example, pupils go to Nottingham on a private train, visit a shopping centre to use the escalators, and go to the cinema. When the inspector visited, pupils in Year 2 were looking forward to visiting a castle. Pupils could talk about clubs they had attended, such as football and multi-sports. Leaders are planning to increase the number of clubs on offer.

The curriculum supports pupils' wider development well. Pupils learn tolerance and respect for different cultures and beliefs. Pupils can talk confidently about developing healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe, including when online. However, they were not able to tell inspectors about other aspects of diversity, such as different families.

In the early years, children learn the routines that help them to become confident and independent learners. There is a strong focus on getting things right from the start, such as ensuring that children hold their pencils using an appropriate pencil grip and learning to form their letters correctly. This helps pupils to write fluently when they are older. The early years curriculum supports children well to develop their communication and their mathematical understanding. Adults help children develop their language and deepen their thinking through skilful questioning and discussion.

The teaching of mathematics is a strength of the school. There is an ambition for all pupils within the mathematics curriculum. Pupils who need extra help receive a bespoke curriculum focusing on key facts. Information is presented clearly in mathematics lessons. Mathematical vocabulary is an important part of the daily teaching and pupils are confident to use the correct language. Pupils know what equipment can help them with their mathematics and these resources are readily available. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They identify and correct pupils' misconceptions quickly. Leaders identify gaps in knowledge across the school but do not always adapt the curriculum to address these.

Pupils with SEND are identified quickly and accurately. Leaders and staff communicate well with parents and carers and with a range of external professionals. This helps to ensure that these pupils receive the support they need to learn the same curriculum as their peers.

The local governing body has oversight of the strengths and next steps for the school. Members of the local governing body hold leaders to account, while also being supportive.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the leadership team. They feel valued, supported and respected. Parents speak very positively about the school and feel well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding is the school's highest priority. Staff are knowledgeable and have received up-to-date safeguarding training. Systems for reporting concerns are effective. Records are detailed. Leaders conduct the necessary checks on staff's suitability to work with children.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum supports pupils' understanding of risk, including how to stay safe online and in the community. Pupils feel safe. They know who to go to if they have a concern.

There are a high number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Leaders have procedures, supported by the educational welfare officer, to address this and check pupils' safety and well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculum does not make clear enough the precise content that pupils should know and remember. This means that the knowledge is not taught, or learned, as systematically as it could be. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum, across all subjects and year groups, makes clear the precise content that pupils need to know and remember.
- Subject leadership is not yet fully developed. Leaders do not always know how well the curriculum is being implemented in their subject. Senior leaders must develop subject leaders' expertise, so that the curriculum is well implemented.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	120023
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10227259
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	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing	Elizabeth Surtees
Headteacher	Mark Tipple-Johnson
Website	www.merrydale-inf.leicester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been no relevant changes since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, curriculum leaders and the inclusion manager.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in three subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils. The inspector listened to pupils read. She also looked at curriculum documentation for geography, art and science.
- The inspector met with the chair of the local governing body and a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector took account of the 11 responses to Ofsted Parent View, and 45 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector met with safeguarding leaders and reviewed school documents relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- The inspector visited the playground and dining hall during lunchtime and spoke informally to parents outside the school with an interpreter.

Inspection team

Gayle Bacon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022