

Inspection of Merton Infant School

Romsey Close, Popley Way, Popley, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 9HB

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 July 2025

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils bubble with enthusiasm when they talk about their school. Being a pupil here is like belonging to a big family with relatives all around the world. Whenever pupils join, great care is taken to settle them into school life. New arrivals who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are admirably supported by 'young interpreters'. The diversity of the school community and the many home languages spoken are widely celebrated.

Nurturing pupils' personal development and well-being are front and centre of the school's work. Staff are extremely caring and supportive. Pupils develop a 'pocket of tricks' to help them manage their emotions and boost their self-esteem. They enjoy each other's company. Particularly impressive is pupils' understanding of their place in the world and their awareness of how, even at their age, they can make it a better place.

The 'MERTON' values are much more than words on a page. Staff explicitly show, teach and encourage the learning habits pupils need to succeed. Day in, day out, pupils are 'motivated', striving for 'excellence', treating others with 'respect', working as a 'team', grasping 'opportunities' and 'never giving up'. They attend regularly and achieve well. The well-designed curriculum hooks pupils in, broadens their experiences and builds their learning over time.

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

The school's passion and determination to do its best for each and every pupil is evident wherever you look. Actions are firmly centred on everyone 'aiming high, achieving together', keeping a careful check on what works and reflecting on what could be even better. Wise use is made of external expertise and up-to-date research when considering changes. Staff value the support that they get to perfect their practice and to develop and play their part as leaders. Governors ensure that they have the right information to hold the school to account.

An unwavering focus on fairness and opportunity permeates the school. Pupils who speak EAL have an exceptional start to their education. Explicit teaching of speaking and listening skills and what words mean are part of everyday practice from early years upwards. Carefully considered resources and going over learning before or revisiting it after lessons support EAL pupils' understanding. A similar approach, paired with careful identification and an in-depth understanding of individual needs, underpins successful learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is still some work to do to ensure that support for children with SEND is as strong in pre-school.

The focus in recent years on fine-tuning the teaching of early reading to meet the increasingly wide range of pupils' needs has paid off. Phonics teaching from Reception onwards is typically adept and accurate. Extra support for pupils who need it is well targeted. Most pupils acquire the basic skills and are confident and fluent readers by the end of Year 2. They know that 'reading is the most important skill' to help them with their learning now and in life in the future. Recent adaptations to the writing and mathematics programmes mean that more pupils are acquiring the skills and knowledge that they need

for junior school. There is, however, more to do to ensure that these changes are well established.

Pupils learn well in other subjects too. The link between well-being and academic success underpins curriculum design. Personal development learning supports pupils to be ready to learn and at their best. They understand that 'practice makes perfect'. Armed with clear guidance for each subject, staff are well supported to know what to teach and what pupils should learn lesson by lesson. Teaching is generally skilful. Staff explain new ideas to pupils clearly and check their understanding before moving on. Developing pupils' spoken language so that they can make sense of and explain their learning takes centre stage. This is not, though, consistently as strong when adults join in children's play in pre-school.

Links between subjects, well-chosen books and clever use of real and virtual visits, bring learning to life and make it meaningful. The Reception 'trip' to Trinidad during the inspection was a magical example. As children fastened their seatbelts ready for the journey, their learning from recent weeks about countries and climates, safety and why they needed a passport was impressive.

Careful attention is given to keeping the curriculum beyond English and mathematics under review and making adjustments to further enhance learning where needed. In a few subjects currently, some skills are not fully covered. The pre-school curriculum is still in development. The distinction between the care and learning needs of two-year-olds and their older classmates is not sufficiently clear.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Work to fully integrate the pre-school is ongoing. The provision for two- to four-year-olds is not of the same very high standard as in the Reception classes. The school should continue its work to develop the pre-school curriculum and its implementation, ensuring particularly that it meets the needs of the very youngest children and those with SEND.
- The ambitions for the main school curriculum are not fully realised. Pupils' skills in some subjects are, therefore, not quite as well developed as they could be. The school should keep a careful check to ensure that the curriculum changes it has identified are needed are enacted, embedded and effective.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	116004
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10379767
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gaye Dove
Headteacher	Larissa James
Website	www.mertoninfants.com
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 March 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- In April 2024, the school took over the leadership and management of Merton Pre-school. Provision for the 46 two- to four-year-old children on roll was included in this inspection. The breakfast and after-school clubs, which are also run by the school and are open to pupils from Merton Junior School, were included too.
- Around two in five pupils speak EAL. Over 30 different languages are spoken. Pupils' proficiency in English ranges from those who are new to English through to those who are fluent. The proportions of pupils with SEND and eligible for pupil premium funding are also above average.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other school leaders; members of the governing body, including the chair; and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult. The team also considered the curriculum in some other subjects through scrutiny of documents, discussions with leaders and sampling pupils’ work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspection team reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.
- Staff and parent views were gathered using Ofsted’s surveys. There were no responses to the pupil survey, but the inspectors met with pupils as well as staff during the inspection. They also talked to pupils around school and outside at breaktimes, and with staff as they went about their work.

Inspection team

Alison Bradley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Linda Appleby

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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