

Inspection of a good school: Mersham Primary School

Church Road, Mersham, Ashford, Kent TN25 6NU

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 February 2022

Outcome

Mersham Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love their school and enjoy learning here. Pupils and staff have positive relationships. Pupils' well-being is of the utmost importance to all leaders and staff.

Teachers make lessons fun and interesting. Pupils know that teachers expect them to do their best. They are proud of their achievements. Older and younger pupils work and play well together.

Leaders want the very best for pupils. Teachers and pupils are looking forward to renewing full participation in the 'Mersham Century'. These form part of the 100 extra activities for pupils to experience during their time in school. One parent said, 'At Mersham they have the opportunity to make memories that will stay with them throughout their lives.'

Pupils feel safe and valued. They do not worry about bullying as, if it happens, they know it will be dealt with straight away. Pupils are confident to talk to adults in school if they have any worries. Leaders and governors have a strong, unwavering commitment to inclusion and equality. One parent said, 'The ethos that the headteacher and her leadership team have cultivated is one of inclusivity, happiness and respect.'

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

Leaders have worked hard to develop an interesting and ambitious curriculum. They have identified the important knowledge and skills that pupils and children in the early years should learn and remember. Pupils generally achieve well. However, some pupils could be helped to learn even more effectively to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Leaders and staff are looking at different ways to check pupils' understanding in lessons so that all pupils can achieve their very best.

Leaders are determined that all pupils receive a well-rounded education. They plan a varied programme of trips, visits and visitors to the school. A wide range of after school

clubs has now resumed. The school's values and the well-considered personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum underpin all that the school does. There is a focus on building up pupils' independence and resilience after COVID-19. Children in Reception are keen to join in all the activities. They share and cooperate well and are kind to each other. Pupils' personal skills and attributes, as well as their academic achievements, prepare them well for their future learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. Leaders work with staff and families to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Effective plans are formulated to make sure that these pupils learn the same curriculum as others and experience success. SEND provision and support are a strength of the school.

Teachers work well together as a strong, supportive team. Staff feel valued and know that their well-being is a high priority for the headteacher and governors. Staff are unanimous in their view that they are proud to work at the school and that it is well led and well managed.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Phonics teaching is well organised and well structured. Children in Reception are taught phonics as soon as they join the school. Children are introduced to new sounds and learn how to blend sounds together to form words. They read books that match the sounds they are learning. Children enjoy listening to different stories staff read during the day. As they progress through school, pupils explore interesting texts, often linked to the topics they are studying. They develop a depth of learning and understanding. Pupils can name their favourite authors, use their knowledge to investigate non-fiction texts and discuss characters, plots and authors' techniques. They develop as confident, fluent readers.

The mathematics curriculum is carefully sequenced and is taught well. Children in Reception have lots of opportunities to explore and talk about numbers. They learn to use correct mathematical language, answer questions and explain their thinking. Pupils build on this as they move through the school. Teachers use questioning well and encourage pupils to remember and build on what they already know. Pupils understand that 'Maths is everywhere', as one pupil remarked, and they found it hard to think of a job that does not involve a knowledge of mathematics.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are friendly and polite. Pupils behave very well in lessons. They concentrate and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils listen to their teachers and each other. They respect others' opinions even when they do not agree with them. Teachers manage the very few challenging, complex behaviour issues well. This ensures that the learning of others is not affected. Parents are supportive of the school and the leadership. One parent said, 'A place where my child can be both a unique individual and also part of a close-knit school community.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, staff and governors are all well trained in safeguarding matters. They understand their responsibilities fully. Staff know pupils very well and quickly identify any signs that a child may be at risk. Procedures for recording concerns are well established. Staff know what to do, and all necessary action is taken swiftly. Leaders make referrals to outside agencies when appropriate. They seek advice from specialist services where needed. All the required checks are completed to ensure the suitability of staff. Leaders and teachers make sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and outside of school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are inconsistencies in how effectively teachers assess and provide feedback in lessons. This means that while pupils generally achieve well, the depth of knowledge of some pupils is not always as well developed as it might be before they move on to new learning. This is particularly the case for those pupils who might need a little extra help to keep up with their learning. Leaders should ensure that the substantial training and development recently started builds on current expertise and skills in assessment so that all pupils consistently achieve as well as they can.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2016.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	118377
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10200089
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lesley Caldwell
Headteacher	Cheryl Chalkley
Website	www.mersham.kent.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	20 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is in a collaboration with nine other primary schools as part of the CARE Foundation Trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and governors. She also held a telephone conversation with the local authority school improvement adviser.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector also looked at other subject documents and observed some pupils reading to staff. Pupils were observed at lunch and in the playground. The inspector spoke informally to different groups of pupils.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead, looked at the single central record of recruitment checks and safeguarding records and talked informally to pupils and staff.
- The inspector considered the views of 40 parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and 32 free-text responses. She also took into account 15 responses to the staff questionnaire and 13 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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