

Mersham Primary School

Address: Church Road, Mersham, Ashford, Kent, TN25 6NU

Unique reference number (URN): 118377

Inspection report: 14 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils attend well. Overall attendance is consistently in line with national averages, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Disadvantaged pupils attend particularly well, so that their attendance is typically above the national average. Leaders consistently emphasise the importance of regular attendance. They monitor pupils' attendance closely. Leaders work constructively with agencies and families who need extra help to overcome barriers to pupils' attendance.

Pupils move around the school in an orderly fashion. They greet visitors politely and routinely hold doors open for adults. Classrooms are calm and purposeful places for pupils to learn, so that they can get on with their work. Pupils behave well during playtimes and join in enthusiastically with organised games during the lunch break. They treat adults and each other with respect. Leaders and staff provide sensitive and effective support for pupils who need extra help to behave well.

The school's inclusive and nurturing atmosphere means that everyone feels valued. Pupils respect difference and diversity and are kind to each other. Bullying is never tolerated. Leaders take swift action to address any concerns about unkindness that may arise.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a broad, balanced and well-sequenced curriculum. It sets out clearly the knowledge and skills pupils will learn in each subject. This provides a secure framework for teaching in each class, including in the mixed-age classes.

The curriculum is generally taught well so that pupils acquire secure foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach and explain new concepts clearly. They routinely check pupils' understanding of what they have learned well.

Leaders monitor the quality of the curriculum and teaching closely. As a result, they are very clear about what is working well and where there is scope for further development. In the past year, leaders have made improvements to the teaching of mathematics. They recognised that teachers were not adapting the mathematics curriculum well enough to focus on the most important knowledge and concepts pupils need to learn.

Leaders have used training to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics. As a result, teachers are increasingly skilled in adapting the curriculum to address misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge, and pupils' achievement in mathematics has improved. However, more work is needed to ensure that these developments are in place consistently across the school.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children achieve well during Reception Year. The school's well-established early years curriculum has been carefully structured to include all areas of learning. Effective teaching

ensures that children learn well across the curriculum. Children acquire key foundational knowledge, including language, vocabulary and communication skills. This ensures that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school's success is reflected in the proportions of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception Year, which are consistently in line with the national average.

Staff maintain warm and caring relationships with children. They respond sensitively to children's emerging needs, providing warm encouragement and reassurance when children are unsure or need extra help. As a result, children feel secure and valued. They rapidly grow in confidence. Children happily join in with activities and experiences, chatting amiably with their classmates and sharing equipment sensibly. Children develop a firm sense of identity and belonging and, by the end of Reception Year, have made firm friends.

Leaders monitor children's learning and development carefully. They use ongoing assessments of children's learning to gauge the effectiveness of the curriculum, making any adjustments required to sustain children's progress. Leaders give children's safety and wellbeing a high priority. Staff are suitably trained to ensure children's welfare.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders are rightly proud of the school's inclusive culture. They make sure that those pupils with vulnerabilities are well supported, including those who are known (or were previously known) to social care. This helps to break down barriers to learning. As a result, these pupils make suitable progress from their starting points. Leaders use additional funding well to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Leaders use a range of assessment procedures effectively to identify pupils' needs when they join the school. They use this information well to identify strategies to aid individual pupils. Support plans provide teachers with the key information they need to help pupils in lessons. Staff benefit from a well-planned training programme to maintain their knowledge of pupils' specific needs.

Leaders keep a careful check on pupils' progress over time. They are responsive to pupils' changing needs, adjusting the support in place as required. Decisions are always made in pupils' best interests. For instance, the school has recently introduced a 'nurture class', which provides valuable support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils who attend this provision develop important skills and attitudes, which enable them to access learning with increasing success. They speak positively about the difference this makes to their wellbeing.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders provide positive role models for pupils and staff. They have high expectations and lead with professionalism and integrity. Pupils' interests are always at the heart of decisions and initiatives.

Leaders have a detailed knowledge of the school's performance. They have taken carefully considered action to address historical weaknesses in mathematics achievement. As a result, pupils' achievement in this subject is improving. Leaders have suitable plans in place

to ensure that this positive trajectory of improvement is maintained. A strategically planned programme of staff training supports the quality of teaching well. This includes opportunities for staff to share expertise and good practice with other schools in the Care Foundation Trust.

A firm sense of community and teamwork pervades the school. Staff are proud to work in the school. They feel valued and appreciate the care and attention leaders and governors give to their workload and wellbeing. Leaders maintain constructive relationships with parents, who are positive about the school's work.

Governors are valued members of the community. They use a range of activities and resources, such as school visits and reports about different aspects of the school, to ensure that they are knowledgeable about the school's work. Governors provide helpful support and challenge for school leaders.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's well-established personal, social and health education programme includes an appropriate range of subjects and themes, including relationships, sex and health education. The programme is supplemented by other valuable experiences across the curriculum, such as trips, visits and 'forest school'.

Pupils have a confident understanding of fundamental British values and can explain why these are important in relation to their own experiences, such as voting for members of the school council. They learn about world religions through religious education lessons and assemblies. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the school's regular visits to the local church and talk about different beliefs respectfully.

The school provides pupils with many opportunities to enrich their learning and broaden their horizons. Special events, such as the Year 6 end-of-year production, make a valuable contribution to the development of pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Clubs such as cheerleading, science, football and choir are very popular with pupils and provide opportunities for them to discover new interests and to develop talents. The school is understandably proud of its sporting successes, including in events such as 'district sports'. Leaders monitor pupils' participation in clubs and activities carefully. They make sure that all pupils have fair access to these activities, including disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils learn about steps they can take to keep themselves safe, including online safety. The school's pastoral work is a notable strength. Initiatives such as the 'nurture class' and the work of the school's emotional literacy support assistant make an important contribution to pupils' social and emotional development and to their mental health. Approaches such as these ensure that pupils learn how to recognise, express and manage their emotions in an appropriate way.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics. Attainment in mathematics at the end of Year 6 has been below the national average for the past two years. Important developments in the teaching of mathematics have led to notable improvements in pupils' learning. However, a minority of pupils continue to have gaps in their mathematical knowledge, which hamper their progress. Leaders recognise that further work is needed to ensure that pupils consistently achieve as well as they should in this subject.

Pupils achieve well in English. They typically attain in line with the national average in reading and writing. The results of the Y1 phonics check are also consistently in line with the national average. This indicates the school's success in equipping pupils with secure early reading skills.

Vulnerable pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, generally make suitable progress from their starting points.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Mersham Primary School is a friendly, welcoming and inclusive place for pupils to learn and play. Staff and pupils exemplify the school's motto, 'a small school with a big heart', beautifully. Pupils speak about the school with affection. They praise staff for being kind, attentive and caring. Pupils say that there is always someone to talk to if they are worried or upset. Many talk of the friendly atmosphere and one said, 'Everyone fits in here!'

Pupils are happy to be in school. They arrive each morning looking forward to the day ahead. Staff maintain warm and caring relationships with pupils who, as a result, feel safe and secure. High expectations and clear routines underpin school life. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They typically behave well in lessons, during breaktimes and when moving around the school. Pupils enter the school in an orderly fashion at the start of the school day. The school's ethos of belonging and respect means that bullying is rarely a concern.

Pupils attend well because they are keen to learn and want to do their best. They speak appreciatively of their teachers and participate enthusiastically in all the school has to offer. Carefully planned events, such as the Year 6 production and a concert for parents, mark the end of a busy academic year, giving many pupils the opportunity to shine and to celebrate their talents. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities play a full and valued role in school life.

Pupils typically achieve well. Children in early years acquire secure phonics skills and pupils achieve consistently well in reading and writing at the end of Year 6. In recent years, pupils have achieved less well in mathematics. However, developments in the teaching of this subject mean that pupils' achievement is improving.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to improve outcomes in mathematics for all pupils by ensuring that the mathematics curriculum is adapted consistently well.
 - Leaders should continue work to ensure that high-quality teaching is securely embedded across the school.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors is Charlotte Francis.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special needs and disabilities coordinator and other members of staff. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is a member of the Care Foundation Trust.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Cheryl Chalkley

Lead inspector:

Julie Sackett, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Graham Chisnell, Ofsted Inspector

Sara Wakefield, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.



The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 14 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

171

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

24.56%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.17%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

15.20%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	45%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	52%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	35%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	72%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	69%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	81%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	66%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	65%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	77%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	51%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	62%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	35%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	58%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	53%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	57%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	80%	62%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	86%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	71%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	60%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	71%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	53%	68%	-14 pp
2024/25 (final)	57%	69%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	80%	80%	0 pp
2024/25 (final)	86%	81%	5 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	73%	78%	-4 pp
2024/25 (final)	71%	78%	-7 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	60%	80%	-20 pp
2024/25 (final)	71%	81%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	4.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.8%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	4.7%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	9.0%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	8.7%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	9.7%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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