

Inspection of a good school: Merridale Primary School

Aspen Way, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV3 0UP

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 May 2024

Outcome

Merridale Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time and their learning in school. They rightly say that staff look after them and that everyone gets on well. Any disagreements are swiftly sorted and harmony returns.

Pupils behave very well and attend school regularly. The school's values are visible through staff and pupils' actions, words and work. Leaders' ambition of 'growing together' shines throughout daily school life. This culminates in pupils achieving well. Pupils are well prepared for what comes next, whether this is the next lesson, the next topic or the next year group. They develop what they need to concentrate well and to make sense of their learning. Pupils' achievement in subjects is secure by the end of key stage 2. They are well placed, both socially and academically, to move into secondary education.

Pupils hold their 'Merridale memories' dear to them. The special moments of damming a stream, climbing a huge hill and taking a ride on a boat form an important and intrinsic part of their journey through school. The upcoming annual Year 6 residential to the seaside is eagerly anticipated.

Governors, staff and pupils are proud to be part of a caring and kind school community. The school's cultural diversity is celebrated by all at every turn. For example, the young interpreters and peer supporters play an important role in helping pupils to feel settled in school and thrive.

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

School leaders work with purpose and impact. They have an accurate picture of the many strengths of the school and what needs further work. They prioritise the right things at the right time. This is leading to an established curriculum that recognises, respects and

relates to the diverse community within which the school sits. Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the care, support and training in place for them.

From the beginning of Nursery, children learn how to work and play well together. The kindness and friendships that develop in the early years continue throughout school. The high priority given, and structured approach in place, to promote the understanding and use of words, phrases and sentences is leading to success.

The defined and specific approach to teaching vocabulary is a golden thread that runs across all subjects from Nursery to Year 6. Staff are skilled at bringing the 'vocab box' to life. Pupils talk about the vocab box, alongside other strategies such as 'rewind and 'fast forward', with clarity. These carefully coordinated and constructed approaches help pupils to know, remember and use a range of words and concepts to support their learning in mathematics, science and beyond. Pupils behave well and achieve well within lessons and units of work. As yet, assessment in many subjects does not help them to make links across and between their learning over time. The notable exception to this is in religious education, where a spiralling curriculum, supported by meaningful assessment, deepens pupils' learning in a way that is impressive.

The vast array of thoughtfully selected texts supports pupils' interests, cultures and faiths. The inclusive nature of the school is replicated throughout the range of texts studied within lessons or available along corridors. Pupils appreciate this rich offer. Poetry forms a part of developing a love of language and literature. Some pupils can recall and perform previous poems that have been studied.

Pupils learn to read well. From a range of different starting points in the English language, they are helped to make sense of sounds and words. This begins by playing with rhymes, sounds and stories in Nursery before moving into phonics from the very first day in Reception. Expert staff are precise in their delivery of phonics. They provide clear and concise teaching in a way that makes a positive difference to pupils' learning. For any pupil who shows a slight miss of the beat within this programme, swift, timely and targeted support ensures they are soon back on track.

The high expectations evident in reading are less visible in handwriting and presentation in writing across the curriculum. There are variations in letter formation and presentation that hinders many pupils' fluency and stamina. Leaders have identified this. They have implemented a new handwriting scheme, but there is more work to do.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve equally as well as their peers. The accurate identification of needs and regular training of staff make a very real difference. Pupils with SEND receive a routine of effective targeted support. This means that they keep up and enjoy the same learning as all pupils. For most pupils with SEND, this is within their class. For a few, the recently established provision in 'the Hive' is a calming space. The routine, the learning tasks, and the care and support given in the Hive help these pupils to begin to make small steps of progress that are enjoyed and celebrated. All pupils, including those with SEND, experience a comprehensive range of visits and experiences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils have not yet reached automaticity in their handwriting. This means that when they concentrate on the content of their writing, their letter formation and presentation are not at the standard they should be. This hinders pupils' ability to write with fluency and ease. The school should further prioritise the recently introduced handwriting policy so that high expectations are set and met whenever pupils write and whoever is teaching them.
- Assessment in some foundation subjects does not link closely enough to the underpinning curriculum concepts and themes. This means pupils can recall specific knowledge from within a lesson but do not always make links across their learning in a subject. The school should continue to refine the way it checks on how well pupils remember and apply their learning over time and ensure this is manageable and purposeful.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2014.

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 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	104334
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10343804
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mohammed Rizwan
Headteacher	Laura Towle
Website	www.merridaleprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has opened 'The Hive' internal provision for pupils with complex SEND. The school has organised a bungalow specifically for this provision with a team of staff in place. Pupils with a range of additional needs, including autism and social, emotional and mental health, access this provision for varying amounts of time.

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 the school and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, 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 considered early mathematics, English, geography and history.
- The inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, around the school and at lunchtime. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and senior leaders. They met with two members of the governing body, including the chairperson. The inspector also met with a representative of the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector: 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.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff from Ofsted's online survey.
- The inspector also spoke with pupils and staff informally during the inspection.

Inspection team

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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