

Inspection of Merrylands Primary School

Cumberland Drive, Laindon, Basildon, Essex SS15 6QS

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 March 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher is Sean Tobin. The head of school of this school is Gemma Pryer. This school is part of Berlesduna Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sean Tobin, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Robin Taverner.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They are proud to be part of a welcoming, caring community. They say that staff are kind and help them if they have any problems. Pupils are confident that staff will keep them safe.

Pupils behave well. They understand and follow the school values of respect, perseverance and kindness. Pupils display these values because staff model expectations. The school is highly inclusive. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), are fully part of the school.

Pupils enjoy participating in a range of activities that develop confidence and broaden their interests. All pupils study outdoor learning. This develops their resilience and communication skills. Many pupils have leadership roles. These include school council, well-being warriors, play leaders and eco-warriors.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned enrichment programme. Clubs for sports, film, music and theatre cater for a range of interests. Educational visits, for example to Hyde Hall Gardens, the Houses of Parliament and Duxford Air Museum, support learning in the classroom. All pupils have access to these visits.

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

The school and its pupils have experienced significant disruption. This is due to the buildings containing reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). Some sections of the site have been closed to pupils for long periods of time. This has led to some lessons being taught at a local secondary school and in spaces other than classrooms. This disrupted pupils' learning experience and impacted negatively on published outcomes for Year 6 pupils in 2024. These outcomes do not reflect how well pupils, including current pupils, typically achieve.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have raised expectations further. They have established a strong vision for the quality of education. New approaches to reading, writing and mathematics challenge all pupils. The curriculum builds pupils' knowledge and skills across a broad range of subjects. Pupils are keen to learn because lessons are well taught and work matches their needs.

Teachers check how well pupils understand key concepts. They provide effective support to address any misunderstandings. This ensures that pupils have a solid foundation for the next steps in their learning. For example, in mathematics, pupils are given many opportunities to practise their skills. This allows them to solve more complex problems.

Pupils enjoy reading. The school's approach to teaching phonics is well understood by staff. Staff skilfully support pupils to decode and blend words. Pupils have a firm foundation and read with confidence. Pupils with SEND get tailored support. A new reading programme allows pupils access to a range of diverse texts and authors. These

texts support pupils to improve their writing and comprehension skills. However, when reading for pleasure, some pupils are not challenged because teachers do not regularly check if their reading book is challenging enough for them.

Staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. This ensures that staff adapt the curriculum as needed to meet pupils' academic, social and emotional needs well. Pupils who attend the specially resourced provision study a well-planned curriculum that meets their needs. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

In Reception and Nursery, children get off to a flying start. The ambitious curriculum develops their independence and confidence. Children take part in a rich variety of activities throughout the day. These build knowledge and develop their physical and social skills. Adults use language with precision when interacting with children. This broadens children's vocabulary and develops their spoken language.

The school has raised further expectations of behaviour and pupils' attendance. Pupils and staff understand these high expectations and strive to achieve them. The school works closely with pupils and their families to tackle the barriers to pupils attending regularly. However, a significant number of disadvantaged pupils still do not attend school on a regular basis. As a result they develop gaps in their learning.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. There is a coherent curriculum that teaches about personal safety and well-being. Pupils understand the importance of democracy, tolerance and treating others with respect.

Senior leaders know the school well. However, some leaders are not yet able to precisely evaluate and articulate the impact of their work or identify when the curriculum is not implemented as effectively as they intend. Trustees and governors check the work of the school with rigour. They offer an appropriate blend of challenge and support. This helps the school to improve. Staff benefit from high-quality training. Staff are very well supported with their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some leaders are still developing the skills to effectively evaluate the impact of the planned curriculum in their subject areas. In these subjects, variations in the effectiveness of curriculum delivery mean that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The trust should ensure that all school leaders can effectively evaluate and articulate the impact of the curriculum, enabling pupils to learn the intended curriculum successfully in all subjects.

- Some pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are frequently absent. This means these pupils miss out on learning and opportunities to benefit from the school's offer to support their wider development. The trust should ensure that the school reviews and develops its strategies to further reduce persistent absence.

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	143205
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10345449
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	556
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robin Taverner
CEO of the trust	Sean Tobin
Headteacher	Sean Tobin, executive headteacher
Website	www.merrylandsprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Berlesduna Academy Trust.
- Large sections of the school have been closed due to buildings containing RAAC.
- The head of school and deputy headteacher have been in post since January 2025.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for autistic pupils. There are 10 pupils on roll.
- The school uses four providers of alternative provision, of which three are unregistered.
- The school offers nursery provision for three- and four-year-olds.

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.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the trust and the chair of the local governing committee.
- Inspectors met with the CEO of the trust, head of school, director of education for the trust, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and staff.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, physical education and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the subject with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to adults teaching and/or supporting pupils, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning. They also heard a selection of pupils read to an adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times. They considered pupils' views about behaviour in school. They also spoke with staff about pupils' behaviour, their workload and well-being.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including school policies, the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation of its work and minutes from meetings of the local governing body.
- Inspectors considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text submissions. There were no responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Rob James, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Laura Hewer	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Rudman	Ofsted Inspector

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