

Inspection of Mercenfeld Primary School

Oakfield Avenue, Markfield, Leicestershire LE67 9WG

Inspection dates: 8–9 June 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that their school is getting better. Those we met were very keen to tell us how they can now concentrate on their work. This is because pupils' behaviour in lessons has improved. They also explained how there was hardly any bullying. When it happens, staff sort it quickly so that everyone can be friends again. Pupils come to school with a smile. They are keen to go to the headteacher's office to meet her and to see Luna the rabbit scampering about.

Pupils say that they trust their teachers and can talk to them if they are ever worried. Those who have needed to do this told us it had helped them a lot. Pupils feel safe at Mercenfeld, and parents agree.

Though pupils do not yet receive a good education, things are improving here too. The curriculum is becoming more ambitious. Pupils' knowledge and skills in mathematics are growing. The effective teaching of phonics is helping pupils to become more fluent readers. However, pupils do not always remember enough of the things they are taught in all subjects.

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

Leadership has improved with the arrival of the headteacher at the start of the school year. Leaders put children's interests first and do not shrink from difficult decisions. All staff now understand that every pupil, in every class, must receive a good curriculum that is well taught. Both the pandemic and turbulence in staffing have had an impact on the briskness of progress. Nevertheless, there are impressive improvements throughout. Parents have noted the changes at Mercenfeld too. A large majority are very supportive and would now recommend the school.

Behaviour in the school is now better. Pupils are respectful and kind, and they no longer disrupt lessons. Their work is demanding, and they are keen to learn more. They now complete their written work neatly. They look after property, and attendance has improved.

The school's personal development programme is now good. Pupils remember important things about relationships and staying safe online. They explain about the British values of respect and democracy. Older pupils told us how ballot boxes and debates worked in national elections. Pupils learn about different communities and how they interact. There are also lots of ways for pupils to take responsibility. The Garden Rangers were very proud to describe their work in the school's extensive allotment. Carrots, onions, potatoes and many other plants are grown there with care.

The quality of education, while improving, is still not good enough. Leaders have identified what they want children to learn by the time that they leave early years. They know what they want pupils to know in subjects such as religious education

and geography before they move on to secondary school. However, these plans do not make clear what pupils need to learn in each subject so that they reach these goals. Lessons are not always in a logical order and do not always build up pupils' knowledge over time. Too often pupils do not understand why they are learning things, or they forget them. This hampers the progress that they make. In subjects where the curriculum is better organised, such as mathematics, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn more.

Not all subject leaders have had enough time yet to check how well their colleagues are teaching their subject, or to support them where this is needed. In some subjects, teachers do not check how well pupils are making progress through the curriculum.

Phonics teaching is now secure across the early years and key stage 1. Teachers work together to deliver lessons. They give any pupil who needs it another lesson the same day to make sure that everyone keeps up. The reading books these pupils receive help them to practise the sounds they know. However, some pupils in key stage 2 who are currently behind in reading have books which are not well matched. These texts do not help them to become fluent readers.

Leaders have improved the early years, including the physical environment. These changes have meant there is fresh momentum to ensure that all children get off to a good start. Children are now better prepared for year 1. Pupils are reading simple words with confidence and are keen to show what they can do.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders ensure that staff receive the training they need to understand the different types of abuse. They know the signs that suggest a child may be suffering from harm. They understand the need to report any concern without delay. They know the procedure for doing this. Leaders keep detailed records that show the actions they take in response to any concerns. These show that leaders contact and work with external agencies as needed.

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View confirm that the school keeps their children safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum plans are not consistently precise. In many foundation subjects across the school, including in the early years, plans do not make clear what all pupils, including those with SEND, need to learn at each point. Plans do not build pupils' learning through effective sequences of lessons. Pupils do not always understand what they are learning about. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans

make explicit the information concerning what pupils need to learn, and that knowledge is taught systematically through a series of lessons that help pupils to understand new knowledge and its significance, and to remember enough of it over the longer term.

- Leaders have begun to think about how they will check that pupils have remembered the taught curriculum for the foundation subjects. Leaders should work closely together to check that the information gathered helps teachers to identify what pupils can remember. They should also check that information is used consistently to address any weaknesses in the curriculum or its delivery.
- Some pupils in key stage 2 have books that are not well matched to their needs. This does not help them to catch up or practise what they know. Teachers of these pupils should be given further training and support to ensure that these pupils become confident, fluent readers.
- Leaders do not know well enough how well curriculum plans are being implemented in different subjects. Senior leaders should continue to give subject leaders sufficient opportunities to check how well new curriculum plans are being implemented across all year groups, including in the early years.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 [here](#).

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	139441
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10184546
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	321
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gareth Nelmes
Headteacher	Chris Chorlton
Website	www.mercenfeld.com
Date of previous inspection	10 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up her post in September 2020.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- In order to judge the quality of education, we focused the inspection on specific subjects of the curriculum. We did deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science, and religious education. This involved meeting with senior and subject leaders, scrutinising curriculum planning, and visiting lessons where pupils were learning these subjects. We met pupils from the lessons and looked at their work in these and in other subjects. We met with teachers about the curriculum they were delivering. We heard children in different year groups read books. We looked at other subjects in the curriculum in less depth.

- In addition, we met with representatives of the local governing body and the coordinator for pupils with SEND. We spoke with a representative of the Bradgate Education Partnership, the multi-academy trust that the school is part of. We read a wide variety of school documents, including the school development plan. We also spoke with other members of staff, such as midday supervisors.
- We took note of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, met with parents at the start of the school day, and considered the results of the Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- In order to judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, we read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and interviewed the designated lead for safeguarding. We also spoke with staff to check details of their safeguarding knowledge and training, that they understood the importance of their responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns without delay, and if they knew the procedure to do this. We checked samples of safeguarding records, spoke with parents about their child's safety at the school, and read responses from Ofsted's Parent View.

Inspection team

Roary Pownall, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Vellensworth	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shaheen Hussain	Ofsted Inspector

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