

# Mercenfeld Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	119937
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379912
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Vivienne McTiffen

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–10
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	253
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Strowger
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andy Kitchen
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Oakfield Avenue Markfield LE67 9WG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01530 243151
<b>Fax number</b>	01530 245708
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<b>Age group</b>	4–10
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	14–15 March 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	379912



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen

Additional inspector

David Westall

Additional inspector

Sonia Bosworth

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 23 lessons or parts of lessons and two assemblies. They listened to pupils read. In total, 15 teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including development plans, information on pupils' attainment and progress, monitoring systems and safeguarding documentation. They analysed responses to questionnaires from 93 parents and carers, 22 staff and 117 pupils

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number are from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The number of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.

Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 5. Since the last inspection, the school has undergone significant changes in leadership. The current headteacher has been in post since January 2011.

A privately-run nursery and out-of-school provision operates in the school building. These are subject to a separate inspection as they are not managed by the governing body.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school which is rapidly improving due to the concerted effort of the new headteacher and his staff. Recently strengthened links with parents and carers increase involvement in children’s learning, which is greatly valued. One comments, ‘The evening sessions explaining how things are taught in school are very helpful’. The school is not judged to be good because improvement since the last inspection, whilst satisfactory and now being urgently addressed, was disrupted due to leadership changes.
- Pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Work seen during the inspection and data collated by the school show that standards are rising because pupils are making accelerated progress in their learning. Much is being done to improve pupils’ attainment in writing but it remains a weaker area.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and motivate pupils to learn. They know pupils well. Although the quality of teaching is improving, it is judged to be satisfactory because some inconsistencies exist in the quality of lesson introductions, the way teachers mark pupils’ work and how well they match work to pupils’ different ability levels, particularly the most able.
- Pupils behave well. They say they are happy in school and feel safe. Attendance is high. The school promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. This is shown by pupils’ eagerness to learn, good behaviour and respectful attitudes towards each other and adults.
- The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The aspirational guidance of the headteacher has created a strong senior leadership team but subject leaders have not been fully involved in judging the impact of teaching and governors are not yet systematically holding the school to account. New initiatives are effectively communicated to staff who receive support on how to improve, enabling their professional development.

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Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, especially in writing, by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects and for a wider range of purposes, with a clear focus on pupils' literacy targets
  - establishing a whole-school approach to handwriting.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching to be good or better by:
  - ensuring teachers use assessment information effectively to match work to ability, especially for more-able pupils
  - making sure pupils are actively engaged during lesson introductions that are not over-long
  - building upon existing good practice so that teachers' marking consistently indicates to pupils how to improve and helps them to understand what they are working towards.
  
- Strengthen leadership and management by extending the monitoring role of all leaders, especially subject leaders and governors, so they have an overview of provision, leading to priorities for improvement.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory. Most parents and carers who returned questionnaires feel their children make good progress in developing communication, reading, writing and mathematical skills. Inspectors found that standards are average and progress is satisfactory. However, progress is accelerating, as noted by one parent: 'My child really enjoys school and has made great progress, especially during this current year'. The school is addressing weaknesses in provision and raising expectations of what pupils should achieve. In Year 2, 2011 test results showed an improvement from 2010 when standards were significantly below average. The school's data show standards by the end of Year 5 are also rising.

Children start in the Reception classes with average abilities overall but many have below average skills in communication, reading and writing. They make good progress in these areas to reach expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. By the end of Year 2 and Year 5 attainment in reading is average but there is evidence of recent more rapid progress. This is because the school promotes the enjoyment of books and provides the right level of challenge for individuals. Pupils say, 'Everyone

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likes reading', and they report they read often. Regular sessions for linking sounds to letters (phonics) and group reading activities contribute to pupils' success. During weekly extended writing sessions pupils write at length and use more complex sentence structures. For example, in a good English lesson, Year 2 pupils used punctuation and grammar, and phonic knowledge, to spell new words when writing about Florence Nightingale. They remembered to use adjectives, adverbs and connectives and some wrote a diary entry in the first person. Most presented their work neatly in legible, joined handwriting but this practice is not consistent throughout the school. This lesson made sure pupils kept their literacy targets in mind while writing. Pupils of all ages write for a range of purposes in subjects across the curriculum but sometimes this is not varied enough and insufficient attention is paid to their literacy targets. In mathematics, pupils enjoy using their calculating skills and many say they like the challenge of problem solving.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with their peers. They receive additional support, especially from teaching assistants, in small groups or individually, and benefit from the school's links with their families and external agencies. They develop confidence in their abilities and make small steps towards their learning goals. Because the school closely monitors how well all its pupils are doing, those known to be eligible for free school meals and the very small number from the Traveller community make steady gains in their learning, as do those from minority ethnic groups and the very few who speak English as an additional language. Many are involved in additional group work, providing extra support in their learning. Newcomers are welcomed and settle quickly.

### **Quality of teaching**

As a result of improvements since the last inspection, teachers are more involved in using assessment information to analyse pupils' progress and match work to their abilities, although there is not yet the level of consistency needed to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they can. Sometimes, introductions are over-long, preventing pupils from being actively engaged because there is too much teacher talk.

Pupils say they learn a lot and enjoy lessons and parents and carers agree. Teachers make interesting links between subjects and develop communication skills well. Through these links across the curriculum teachers promote pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding, developing curiosity and knowledge of past and present cultures. Pupils have plenty of chance to talk to each other about their ideas, often before writing. This positive contribution to thinking, social and communication skills was seen to good effect when pupils worked in groups to discuss and record a story plan about Romulus and Remus, linked to their topic on the Romans. They took it in turns to write sentences after deciding together what to write. Teachers manage classes well, consistently expecting good behaviour, aiding pupils' good moral development. They plan lessons together, ensuring continuity between classes and for those taught by more than one teacher. Staff are skilled at meeting the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs during lessons, often through small group work.

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Teachers monitor pupils' work during lessons and identify and remedy any misunderstandings. They praise effort and provide positive feedback. There are good examples of teachers' marking in books indicating how to improve and the next step in learning. In these cases, pupils know what they are working towards, but this practice is not consistent in all classes or subjects.

In Reception classes, teachers focus well on developing children's literacy skills and provide a range of interesting activities across all areas of learning. They extend the curriculum by making use of outdoor areas and ensure a balance between adult-led tasks and those children choose for themselves. Staff carefully collate children's work in 'Learning Journeys' which clearly show progress. Children are proud of these and they are regularly shared with parents and carers.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils get on well together and behaviour is good. They enjoy sharing resources and finding out together. They talk enthusiastically about their favourite activities and say they enjoy each others' company. They strive to do well and recognise the importance of good behaviour, which makes a strong contribution to their positive attitude to learning. Children in Reception classes learn to conform to daily routines and how to behave well in preparation for their move to Year 1. Few parents and carers or pupils express any concerns about behaviour. One pupil summed it up by saying, 'We have fun and have a laugh but we are sensible'. Pupils approach their work with seriousness and maturity. They respect the views of others and enjoy taking on responsibilities, especially when helping younger pupils or improving the environment. This leads to a harmonious and happy school, as recognised by parents and carers, one of whom comments, 'We are very pleased with the caring attitude and interest shown by the headteacher and teachers'. Any incidents of poor behaviour or bullying of any type are stringently recorded and appropriately dealt with by the school, but these are rare. Levels of attendance are consistently high. Very few pupils are persistently absent or arrive late.

Evidence that behaviour has been consistently good over time is provided by parents and carers. The vast majority who returned questionnaires agree there is a good standard of behaviour at the school and that their child feels safe. Pupils say they value the level of support they receive from teachers and are confident that any problems they have can be shared with staff. They know how to keep themselves safe and explain a range of unsafe situations because this is given due regard by the curriculum, especially in personal and social education and information and communication technology (ICT), and in assemblies.

### **Leadership and management**

The leadership team has a determination to move the school forward which is shared with staff. In a relatively short space of time, the new headteacher has formulated plans for improvement which are developmental and achievable, and beginning to

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pay off. He involves senior leaders in implementing these plans and has prepared subject leaders, especially in English and mathematics, for greater involvement in their roles. They are now well placed to take on more systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of provision, especially to improve the quality of teaching. Governors are highly supportive and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are establishing greater links with parents and carers through Parents' forum meetings to more effectively gather views. After a period of change, they are keen to develop a more rigorous monitoring role to set priorities and sustain improvement. The impact of current plans, including improvements in teaching and pupils' accelerated progress, indicates the school's satisfactory capacity to continue improving.

A broad and balanced curriculum generally meets pupils' needs. Trips, sports and musical activities, some in partnership with others, enhance the curriculum, adding to pupils' enjoyment and social development. Leaders and managers, including those of the Early Years Foundation Stage, promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There is clear guidance on good behaviour and attendance. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination. A strongly inclusive ethos creates a cohesive community where pupils respect each others' differences. They say they enjoy their links with others outside school such as the Islamic centre and participation in group and partner work, as well as the school council and as eco-monitors. As a result, pupils acquire personal qualities and attitudes which equip them well for the next stage in their education.

Effective systems for tracking pupils' progress flag up any underachievement, leading to intervention programmes that narrow any gap in performance between different groups of pupils. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. The necessary vetting procedures are carried out and staff receive the required training in child protection.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



16 March 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Mercenfeld Primary School, Markfield, LE67 9WG**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed seeing you at work and talking to you. Your views and the answers to the questionnaires helped inspectors a lot. We were impressed by your high attendance and the links your school is making with your parents and carers to help them to understand your learning. You behave well and develop good personal qualities for the future.

Your school helps you to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time you leave but you are starting to do even better, especially in reading and mathematics. We have asked the school to make the following improvements to help you all do better, especially in writing:

- give you greater opportunities to write more in other subjects and use your literacy targets
- choose a way to teach everybody to write in joined handwriting
- check that teachers give you work that is just right, not too hard and not too easy, especially for those of you who are more able
- improve teachers' marking so you always know how to improve and what you are working towards
- make sure you are involved during lesson introductions and they are not too long
- help everybody who runs the school to check how well it is doing and how it can improve.

We hope the things we have asked the school to do will help you to make the best possible progress. All of you can help by continuing to enjoy your learning and working hard.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne McTiffen  
Lead inspector

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