

# Merrydale Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	120024
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicester
<b>Inspection number</b>	395751
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 July 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	David Martin HMI

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>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	297
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Gibson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Catriona Mugglestone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 June 2009
<b>School address</b>	Claydon Road Leicester LE5 0PL
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 2767708
<b>Fax number</b>	0116 2762820
<b>Email address</b>	office@merrydale-jun.leicester.sch.uk; cmugglestone@merrydale-jun.leicester.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	3–4 July 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	395751



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## Introduction

Inspection team

David Martin

Her Majesty's Inspector

Karen Feeney

Additional Inspector

Kathryn (Kate) Hill

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 23 teaching sessions, seeing lessons conducted by all the class teachers currently working in the school. They also observed some smaller groups working both in classrooms and as separate groups, and heard some pupils read in class. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation. This included: school development planning and self-evaluation; records of meetings of the governing body and papers relating to school leadership and management; records of the school's assessment of pupils' current progress; and representative samples of pupils' work. Inspectors received responses to 80 parental questionnaires and considered these alongside those from pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

Merrydale Junior is a slightly larger than average primary school with more boys than girls on roll. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. More than twice the proportion of pupils than found nationally are from minority ethnic groups, and many speak English as an additional language. Just under half of all pupils are White British, just under a quarter come from Asian heritages and a slightly smaller group are from Black African backgrounds. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is much higher than average. In 2011, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

A new headteacher was appointed in September 2011. There have been further changes to the senior team with the appointment of a deputy headteacher. Changes have been made at middle leader and classroom teacher level, with further appointments made to take effect from September 2012.

**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>4</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress made by some year groups within the school.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 has been below average over time, but fell sharply in 2011. This was due to weaknesses in teaching and leadership that have since been addressed. Attainment for the current Year 6 is closer to national averages and is set to be above floor targets. Pupils are also making better progress than that seen nationally. Nevertheless, progress for some other year groups, although improving, is not as good as it should be.
- Teaching has improved considerably during the year, although school leaders are aware that there is still some distance to travel. Staffing has been re-structured and strengthened through new appointments, and staff have had suitable training. Teaching has been monitored thoroughly and staff have clear performance targets in relation to teaching and pupil progress. Although there is little inadequacy in teaching, too little teaching is currently good.
- Although satisfactory overall, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils have been transformed during the year. Although temporary exclusions initially increased as leaders asserted their clear expectations, these have now fallen back to average levels. Attendance has improved to the national average and fewer pupils are persistent absentees. Punctuality has also improved, although a few families are not sufficiently supportive of school expectations, as a small number of pupils miss the important brisk start to the school day. Pupils feel, and are kept very safe in school. There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills, take responsibility and make decisions.

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- School leaders and governors have had to address many issues and weaknesses during the current school year. They have done this successfully, and gained the confidence of staff and parents through the improvements that they have made. Leaders are not complacent, however, and have planned thoroughly for the next stage in the school's transformation, with a renewed focus on moving teaching from satisfactory to good to ensure stronger progress for all pupils.

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

- Improve the progress made by pupils across the school so that it is at least in line with, and usually better than expected progress in all year groups by September 2013, through:
  - eradicating any remaining inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion of good teaching to at least 60% of all lessons
  - ensuring that assessment opportunities are regularly and consistently used to check pupils' understanding and progress within lessons, and to adapt teaching accordingly
  - using information about previous learning to inform planning to match the needs of all pupils
  - ensuring that marking and feedback provide clear guidance on the next steps in learning, and that pupils are given opportunities to respond to and improve their work as a result
  - refining the use of assessment data in order to track and evaluate progress even more carefully and to provide timely intervention where required.
- Further develop pupils' involvement in the school by:
  - encouraging children to be independent learners who are increasingly able to regulate their own conduct and behaviour when not directly supported by staff
  - providing broader opportunities for pupils to take positions of responsibility and develop decision-making skills.

## **Main report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Most parents believe that their children make good progress during their time at the school. Although this is certainly the case for the current Year 6, inspection findings and the school's own evaluation of progress show that this is not yet the case for all pupils. Although progress is improving, it is not as strong in other year groups, and not at the level expected in most schools.

Classrooms are characterised by enthusiastic pupils engaged in their learning. They generally show positive attitudes and concentrate well on the task in hand.

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Relationships are good, and pupils reported to inspectors that 'teachers are kind and make learning fun'. They also told inspectors that this was not always the case in previous years.

Most pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and are productive in terms of both written work and their responses to questioning from the teacher. For example, pupils in one short 'busy maths' session were keen to point out how their table grids worked, as they made rapid progress with the task. They enjoy opportunities to share their ideas through 'talk partners', which gives less confident pupils the opportunity to try out their ideas before answering a teacher's question. Pupils are not always given enough of these opportunities. Pupils reported that most marking is helpful, but only in a few classes were examples seen of pupils following up on teachers' comments and improving their work as a result. Progress in reading is improving, and moving close to expected standards.

From low or often very low starting points, most pupils are starting to make expected rates of progress. Progress is however uneven across the school, with some year groups making better than expected progress, and some making progress that is not good enough to overcome previous underperformance. Pupils with behavioural difficulties now make better progress and a small number have moved to more appropriate provision elsewhere. Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and those who have English as an additional language, are assessed early and supported well. They are effectively integrated into the life of the school and their individual needs met. These pupils therefore make similar and sometimes better progress as their peers.

### **Quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Parents and carers expressed the view that their children are taught well. While teaching has certainly improved quickly this year and some is certainly good, there is not enough good teaching to compensate for previous weak progress, as shown by inspection evidence and school self-evaluation.

Training for teachers this year has focused on developing sound classroom practice and consistent approaches. This has led to certain strengths that were clearly seen during the inspection. These include the effective use of resources, including digital technology and generally good subject knowledge. There is more consistent marking and higher expectations about the quantity and quality of pupils work. Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and those who have English as an additional language are well supported. Work is often carefully structured for them and teaching assistants are therefore able to encourage pupils to complete tasks for themselves. There is some good literacy across the curriculum, as seen in topic work, for example, about the Paralympics. There is good consideration given in such topics to pupils' broader personal development in terms of their moral, cultural and spiritual awareness.

In the better lessons seen, pupils worked more independently than was seen in most

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lessons. In a mathematics lesson with older pupils, good teaching secured pupils' understanding of structure and relationships in number. Pupils' confidence and versatility was nurtured through a strong emphasis on problem solving using mental and written methods. The teacher demonstrated good subject knowledge and subject-specific teaching skills with effective planning, regular checks on progress and appropriate intervention. In another successful lesson pupils were given the opportunity for a period of sustained reading. The teacher then used carefully-crafted questioning to probe pupils' understanding of the text and to extend their vocabulary, resulting in good progress being made in the understanding of the text they had read.

In weaker teaching, teachers do not plan carefully enough to meet the needs of all pupils based on information about what pupils already know or can do. During lessons, some teachers are not planning or using appropriate opportunities to check pupils' understanding so that they can adjust the lesson to meet their different needs.

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

Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Behaviour, up until September 2011, was of concern to the staff of the school. Some parents still express concerns about behaviour and a small number about bullying, but pupils and the school's records confirm that behaviour is much better this year and that there is little bullying of any kind. Pupils also said that they were confident that adults now deal with any incidents quickly and effectively.

Behaviour in classrooms was good in most lessons seen during the inspection. A few pupils were less attentive where teaching was not as engaging and interesting, or when lessons lacked pace. Pupils told us that this is generally the case. Sometimes pupils are not able to sustain their concentration when working for a short time in a group not directly supervised by an adult. Adults manage pupils calmly and expectations are clear. This means that classroom activities proceed without disruption to learning.

Pupils have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They feel that the school helps them to understand these issues. There is a confidential 'worry box' that is used by pupils if they have a concern, but most are confident that there are approachable adults who are very ready to help them.

Attendance has risen sharply and the school works proactively with families to stress the importance of being in school in order to learn. The school council expressed the view that more responsibility might be given to this group in the future, for example giving them a small amount of money to spend on improving the playground.

### **Leadership and management**

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Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has brought a renewed vigour and sense of purpose to the school. She has taken a calm, strategic view of the many improvements that were needed at the time she took over the school, after a period of turbulence and decline. She has put into place an accurate and efficient system for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. This has led to swift and effective action to improve the staffing structure, behaviour systems and teaching and learning approaches. Key appointments have been made at senior, year leader and classroom level that have strengthened the staffing during the year and again for September 2012. The deputy headteacher and behaviour mentor appointments have had a strong impact on improving behaviour and ensuring that no pupil or groups of pupils are discriminated against. School monitoring and evaluation has been very thorough and has led to sound and embedded improvements in teaching and learning. While not progressing as fast as the headteacher would like, teaching and pupil progress have improved and there are clear plans for the next stage of development. Most importantly, the headteacher has the full support of her staff in the changes that are being implemented. Year leadership, in particular, has been strengthened through having clear job descriptions. All teachers are clearly accountable for the progress of pupils, for example through regular pupil progress reviews. These factors indicate that the school has the capacity to improve further.

The curriculum is effective in ensuring a broad and balanced programme is focused on children's needs. This includes attention to their personal, moral and spiritual development, as seen in visits to places of worship. Literacy and numeracy are covered soundly, both as individual subjects and through topic work. Assessment data are used well to track pupils' progress. New systems introduced for September 2012 will provide a more precise analysis to show clearly how each pupil, class and year group is performing. At present, for example, data to show the impact of interventions are not readily available.

The governing body has also been re-structured. Additional governors have been recruited with relevant expertise and the team has now established good procedures for evaluating the school's performance. Recent visits, for example, have resulted in questions and actions that have both supported and challenged the school. They ensure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All leaders and managers demonstrate a determination to ensure that all pupils achieve to their potential and can take advantage of all that the school can offer.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.**



5 July 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Merrydale Junior School, Leicester, LE5 0PL**

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school. I am writing to let you know what inspectors found from talking with you and watching you at work and play. A special 'thank you' goes to the pupils that we met at lunchtime or who filled in the questionnaire. You told us, and we agree, that your school has improved a great deal in the last year. This is what we think has improved the most:

- Year 6 pupils have worked very hard this year. Because of the good teaching that they have enjoyed, they have made better progress than most pupils of the same age from their starting points.
- Most of you have a good attitude to your work so that your teachers can concentrate on helping you to learn.
- Most pupils behave well and you are confident that adults will sort out any difficulties that arise, such as occasional bullying or disagreements.
- Mrs Mugglestone and her staff have worked hard to improve the school in many different ways, and this is making a real difference for you.

However, there are some things that the inspectors believe need to improve urgently before the next inspection of the school and we have therefore given your school a 'notice to improve.' This means that the school will receive another visit in a few months to check on the progress being made. The adults who lead your school will take steps to ensure that all teaching is as good as the best that we saw. Teachers will check how well you are learning more often in lessons, and use this information in planning lessons. Their marking will be used to help you improve your work. School leaders and governors will check regularly that you are all making good progress, and find ways to help those who may need additional help. Staff will provide more opportunities for you to become independent learners, take responsibility and make decisions.

I would like, on behalf of the inspection team, to wish you all the very best for the future, particularly the Year 6 pupils moving on to secondary school.

Yours sincerely

David Martin  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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