

Merrydale Junior School

Claydon Road, Leicester, LE5 0PL

Inspection dates

2–3 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too much teaching requires improvement because it does not challenge pupils, particularly the more-able, sufficiently in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Too many pupils do not reach the expected levels in reading, writing, and mathematics by the time they leave the school.
- Leaders' plans to improve teaching are unclear and do not tell teachers exactly what they need to do to achieve better outcomes for pupils.
- Governors do not challenge senior leaders rigorously enough to eliminate teaching that requires improvement so that outcomes for all pupils are improved.
- Teachers' marking does not always provide pupils with enough guidance to help them understand what they need to do to improve. The presentation of pupils' work is untidy.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough support in developing their independent reading skills and as a result, pupils do not make enough progress in reading. Adults occasionally give pupils too much guidance. As a result, they do not develop skills to learn independently quickly enough.
- Planning is weak in subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result, pupils do not have good opportunities to learn well across the full range of subjects taught.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving because of the headteacher's determined leadership. For example, pupils' attitudes to learning are good because the headteacher insists that pupils behave well in school.
- Relationships between the whole school community are strong. Consequently, pupils say they feel safe and well cared for.
- Where there is consistently good or better teaching, for example, in Year 6, pupils make good progress.
- The school has successfully raised attendance levels, which are now in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 18 lessons, many of them observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in English and mathematics in all year groups.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and checked their progress in learning the sounds letters make (phonics) in Years 3 and 4.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils about their work to gauge their views on their progress in school. They also talked to pupils about how safe they feel in school and the wider world.
- An inspector attended an assembly and checked how the pupils behaved at playtime and lunchtime.
- Meetings took place with members of the governing body and school leaders.
- The lead inspector had a discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to parents and carers about the school and took account of their responses to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View.
- An inspector scrutinised the arrangements and records kept to safeguard pupils as well as the school's child protection procedures.
- The school's action plan and self-evaluation were scrutinised, and inspectors checked the records that leaders and teachers use to assess pupils' learning and progress.
- The school's last full inspection was in July 2012. The school was given a notice to improve because the achievement of pupils was inadequate. Since then, in February 2013, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors monitored the school and judged that the school was making satisfactory progress.

Inspection team

Jan Connor, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Roy Bowers	Her Majesty's Inspector
Aileen King	Additional Inspector

Full report

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.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools.
- The majority of pupils come from White British and Indian backgrounds. A significant minority come from African backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is well above the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked-after children.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than in most schools. The main areas of additional need include pupils with moderate learning difficulties, emotional and social difficulties, and speech, language, and communication needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in order to raise achievement by:
 - providing more challenge in lessons, particularly for the more-able pupils
 - making sure it is clear what all pupils should learn in each lesson so that they make rapid progress
 - improving teachers' marking to so that the next steps in learning are clear to the pupils
 - improve the teaching of reading by making sure all independent reading activities challenge the pupils to improve their skills
 - raising teachers' expectations about the standards of presentation of pupils' work.
- Increase the rigour with which leaders and managers check the progress pupils make in their learning and then use this to improve teaching and raise standards by:
 - using the information they have on pupils' achievement more precisely to identify pockets of underachievement and implement effective strategies to eliminate them
 - developing the skills of subject leaders to enable them to support senior leaders more effectively
 - making sure governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and that they use this information well to challenge leaders to bring about improvements.
- Improve planning so that pupils have better opportunities to develop their skills systematically across the full range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils join the school with standards in reading, writing, and mathematics, which are below average. They do not learn quickly enough. Consequently, by the time they leave Year 6, their attainment is still below average. As a result, they are not well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- Pupils' attainment and progress are improving, especially in writing. However, progress is slower in reading than in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make the most rapid progress in Year 6 because of the positive interventions put in place by the headteacher and governors. Consistently good teaching in this year group means pupils' progress has increased.
- The school has bought new resources to encourage pupils to read and pupils enjoy reading. However, they do not make as much as progress as they could because less confident readers do not have sufficiently well-developed skills to read unfamiliar words. Readers that are more capable are not sufficiently challenged to read texts that are more complex. Consequently, not enough pupils attain the higher levels in reading by the time they leave Year 6.
- Pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding make similar progress to other pupils. However, the attainment of these pupils remains about one term behind their peers in English and two terms behind in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make nationally expected progress. This is similar to the progress made by other pupils.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make expected progress. Carefully chosen resources help the pupils to develop their use of spoken English. Consequently, they learn at similar rates to other pupils. Pupils from all backgrounds make similar progress to other pupils.
- The presentation of pupils' work is often untidy and pupils' handwriting requires improvement because not all pupils write with care when joining up their letters.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching across the school is not yet good because there are too many inconsistencies in the quality of lessons taught.
- Where teaching requires improvement, planning is not clear about what pupils will learn. Therefore, the tasks set for different ability groups do not meet their needs well. As a result, pupils do not learn at fast enough rates.
- Teachers' planning is not always secure in the full range of subjects taught in school. This means that teaching does not challenge the pupils to gain skills securely in all subjects.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide support for disabled pupils and those who have special

educational needs but this is not always effective because some teaching assistants do not give them sufficient time to think for themselves before helping them.

- Teachers encourage pupils to read. The 'Reading Miles' prize successfully encourages pupils to read at home and at school. However, there are missed opportunities to develop pupils' skills in independent reading activities. The more-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to read books that are more difficult. As a result, not all pupils make the progress they should in reading.
- In good mathematics lessons, teachers use mathematical language well and have clear learning outcomes for pupils. In these lessons, pupils are highly motivated. The more-able pupils are challenged to think for themselves and they make good progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and with care. Pupils understand what they have done well; nevertheless, the feedback teachers give to pupils does not always give clear enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their work further.
- The strongest teaching in Year 6 has a clear purpose to the learning and all pupils work hard to achieve their goals. Teachers challenge their more-able pupils appropriately and teachers' questions give pupils an opportunity think carefully about their own learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are consistently positive even when the teaching lacks challenge.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They regularly open doors for adults and show how they care for each other by the harmonious way they all work together in lessons.
- Pupils play safely together during playtimes and lunchtimes. While there remain some incidents of unacceptable behaviour these are now rare. Behaviour in school has improved well since the last full inspection and exclusions have reduced rapidly so that they are closer to the national average this year.
- The 'Rules and Expectations' clearly set out by the headteacher and her team help to make sure that the school is a secure and safe place for the pupils. Pupils say this has changed the way they feel about coming to school and they like the high expectations the adults have of their behaviour. They know that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The school works hard to see that all pupils attend regularly and work with parents and carers to get their children to school on time. Pupils' attendance is now in line with the national average.
- The pupils say that bullying is rare and they were able to talk about different forms of bullying including cyber bullying. They are proud of the award they received from Leicester City Council for the work they did on preventing bullying in their school.
- On Parent View, virtually all respondents reported that their children are safe and well cared for in school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management, including governance, require improvement because standards are not improving rapidly enough in all year groups and teaching is not consistently good across the school.
- Plans to improve the quality of teaching are detailed but they do not focus sharply on what teachers need to do to improve pupils' learning.
- The headteacher's determined leadership has brought about improvements in the outcomes for pupils. Her drive to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance has brought the whole school community together with the same vision to improve achievement for all.
- Senior leaders and subject leaders support the headteacher well in her vision for school improvement. All leaders are involved in checking the school's work. However, this does not focus sharply enough on how well pupils are learning in lessons and so underachievement is missed.
- Senior leaders focus rightly on the teaching of English and mathematics. However, the teaching in a range of other subjects is not planned well and lacks precision. The ways in which pupils gain knowledge and skills are not well developed and do not show how pupils will improve their learning in all subjects.
- The school successfully brings together different groups of pupils under their 'Aims and Values' theme. Pupils' understanding of different faiths and their development in creative arts makes a strong contribution to their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development and promotes equality of opportunity.
- Arrangements for managing teacher's performance are based securely on the national standards for teaching. The headteacher makes sure the governors have the information they need to link pay to teachers' performance and successful outcomes for pupils.
- The school has received advice and expertise from the local authority that rightly identified the school as underperforming. They have supported school leaders to bring about change by helping to strengthen the leadership team. The local authority has also brought in support to improve the behaviour of the pupils. Links with a school with a Local Leader of Education have supported the leadership team to improve how they check pupils' progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors work closely with senior leaders to bring about improvements in the outcomes for pupils. They understand about the data for pupils' achievement.
 - Governors visit the school regularly and are all linked with classes. They undertake training to ensure the health and safety of the pupils and staff. All safeguarding procedures comply with statutory requirements.
 - Governors are becoming increasingly effective in challenging underperformance in all pupils. However, governors do not focus rigorously enough on teaching to ensure that they challenge senior leaders to eliminate any teaching that requires improvement so that all teaching is good or better.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120024
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	408902

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	341
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Gibson
Headteacher	Catriona Mugglestone
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2012
Telephone number	0116 2767708
Fax number	0116 2762820
Email address	office@merrydale-jun.leicester.sch.uk

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