

The Merton Primary School

Cherry Drive, Syston, Leicester, LE7 2PT

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The progress of pupils is good. Most children begin school with skills lower than those typical for their age and leave Year 6 with standards that are broadly average.
- The quality of teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Teachers know their children very well which allows them to give clear guidance on how to improve their learning.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage due to some inspired teaching, co-ordinated teamwork and excellent resources in the Reception classroom.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show a high regard for their teachers; they are inquisitive and are keen to learn from each other as well as from adults.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents say their children are looked after well. Pupils say they feel safe. The school's safeguarding procedures are robust.
- The excellent headteacher is fully committed to providing the best care and education for all pupils at this school. She is ably supported by experienced and effective subject leaders who provide effective support and guidance as role models to other staff.
- A good range of subjects provides rich and stimulating activities that engage pupils' interest keenly.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the main strengths of the school, and what needs to improve. They provide appropriate challenge to school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are too few opportunities for pupils to use and improve writing skills in other subjects.
- There are not enough opportunities for staff to share expertise to raise the quality of teaching further.
- More able and middle ability pupils are not sufficiently challenged enough to achieve the highest standards.

Information about this inspection

- The Merton Primary School converted to an academy in October 2012.
- The school is a larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is much lower than that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Inspection team

Faheem Chishti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ann Gill

Additional Inspector

Martin Bertulis

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons of which four were observed jointly with the head teacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and different groups of people involved with the school. These included pupils, parents, members of the governing body, members of the teaching staff and a representative from the academy's collaborative partnership.
- Inspectors took into account the results of the school's recent parental surveys, the school's recent pupil attitude survey, the 35 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, written responses from a very small number of parents and carers from a parent and 31 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including plans for improvement, records of the school's checks on pupils' and teachers' performance, safeguarding and attendance documents, minutes of meetings of the governing body and school policies.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding in order to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for the most able, by:
 - providing even more challenge for middle and higher ability pupils so that more of them achieve standards of the highest level
 - ensuring pupils have greater opportunities to apply skills learnt in writing, extensively across a range of subjects
 - ensuring some of the outstanding practice already found in school is shared with all staff so that practice is more consistent.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start the school in Reception with skills and knowledge below those typically expected for their age. They make good progress in most year groups and subjects, so that, by the time they leave the school in Year 6, they reach standards that are broadly average.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress in most areas of learning and although there are slight variations in cohorts, most children leave at the end of Reception year with standards broadly typical of their age and well prepared for Year 1.
- The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is usually broadly average. However, due to very good progress currently in Key Stage 1, pupils are well on track to reach standards above the national average this year. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is not consistently high compared to the national average because not enough pupils reach the highest levels, particularly in mathematics.
- Reading skills are taught well using phonics (learning letters and sounds they make) and pupils use these skills successfully in their initial efforts in reading and writing. Pupils perform well in the national reading screening check in Year 1 achieving standards above the national average. The progress of pupils in reading across the school is good due to a strong focus on the teaching of reading skills for all pupils.
- Pupils' progress in writing across the school is good. The quality of writing is generally of a high standard given their starting points. Current inspection evidence shows, however, that standards achieved at the end of Year 6 in 2013 are not set to be matched in 2014 due to few pupils reaching the highest levels. In 2013, although the attainment of boys in their writing was above the national average, they still lagged behind girls by about one year. The gap has closed this year.
- Standards in mathematics are broadly average by the end of Year 6. In 2013, not enough pupils reached the higher levels in mathematics, however this is set to improve in 2014 because of pupils' good progress. The progress of pupils in mathematics at Key Stage 1 shows an improving picture, with standards at the end of Year 2 set to rise sharply in 2014.
- The progress of pupils in reading is also good, particularly in Key Stage 1 where standards are set to rise in 2014. Attainment is broadly average at the end of Year 6.
- The most-able pupils make similar progress to other pupils, but not enough of them reach the higher levels in reading, writing and in mathematics. This is because the work is not always hard enough for them to challenge their thinking.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective support so that they make similarly good progress to other pupils in the school. Those receiving additional support to meet individual education targets, are helped to grow as confident learners as a result of effective support provided by adults.
- The progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to, and sometimes better than, that of their peers in school in reading, writing and in mathematics. The gap between their attainment and that of others pupils in the school, evident in 2013, is closing in writing and has closed in reading. These pupils now perform better than other pupils in school in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Evidence gathered from a range of sources shows that the quality of teaching over time is good. Teachers have an excellent understanding of their pupils which results in inquisitive pupils who know how to improve their learning. Their own self reflection as well as helpful comments from teachers in their marking results in a keen desire to learn. For example, in a Key Stage 2 lesson, pupils were asked to make short jottings at the end of the lesson to reflect on what aspects of the lesson they had benefited from the most, and what they still needed to improve.
- Teachers usually set work which gets the best out of pupils with differing abilities and often builds on what they already know and understand. Teachers often reflect on pupils' previous experiences and learning and then set work the next day dependent on what they achieved in the previous lesson. However, some pupils, particularly the most able in the school, are not challenged sufficiently to produce work of a higher quality in order to attain the highest standards.
- The teaching of reading is good. Good subject knowledge and well trained staff contribute to good progress being seen across the school. The school's method of teaching reading as whole class reading lessons is effective. This ensures key reading skills are taught to all pupils resulting in confident, inquisitive readers. Pupils have ample opportunities to read regularly, often to another adult in school, but they say they would like even more opportunities to engross themselves in their reading whilst at school.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children get off to an excellent start in their education due to an exciting classroom environment and outstanding teaching that often stimulates children's imagination. Pupils work well with each other, often sharing ideas to complete tasks. For example pupils were able to write about how they would solve problems set for them by imagining they were super heroes.
- Mathematics is taught well resulting in a good proportion of pupils making good progress. Pupils use jottings and notes to help them solve problems and often ask challenging questions about mathematical concepts. For example, in a Key Stage 2 lesson an enquiring pupil was puzzled as to what a smaller unit of measure for measuring angles was other than degrees. Teachers welcome such challenging and inquisitive questions enabling pupils to think even more deeply about their own learning.
- Teachers often use resources well to aid their teaching, and often have high expectations of work set for pupils, however, this is not consistent enough in all classrooms.
- Pupils' books show that their work is marked regularly and extensively. This is the case in both writing as well as mathematics books. Pupils are given excellent guidance of how to improve their work and often respond thoughtfully to teachers' comments. The quality of writing in other areas of the curriculum is not always as strong as that found in their writing books, and pupils do not always have enough opportunities to practise their key writing skills at length.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from good support because all adults, and particularly teaching assistants, ensure that activities are at just the right level to help them succeed in the tasks set. The progress of these pupils is checked regularly by all staff, especially teaching assistants who know their needs well. This is to ensure that activities set for these pupils have a positive effect.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to questionnaires or met with inspectors are very happy with the quality of teaching experienced by their children.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and that they like lessons. Pupils are valued as individuals and as a result, they feel proud of themselves and their school. These positive attitudes are almost always evident in classrooms, and this enables pupils to make good progress.
- Behaviour outside the classroom during lunchtimes and at breaks is good. Pupils mentioned that the dining experience was 'delightful'. Extensive outdoor facilities such as a small wood, 'huff and puff' large play and other sports facilities ensure that pupils are never bored outside.
- Pupils have a huge range of extra activities from which to choose that enhance their lives considerably. The love for music is evident throughout the school. For example, pupils' performance at a music concert the previous evening was celebrated well through a class assembly, using images and recounts of the experience by pupils. This reflects a strong class and whole school ethos.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including those posed by the use of the internet. They say they feel safe and well cared for. Pupils report that bullying and racism are rare. Logs kept by the school show that any misbehaviour is dealt with swiftly and appropriately by staff in a caring and supportive manner.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. For example, pupils understand and implement the school rules around the 'Four Bs' well - be fair, be calm, be safe, be seen. Pupils say that they feel safe and that the school is a safe place to be in. They have a good appreciation of a range of different risks. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe if, for example, cyber-bullying were to occur.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. This is because pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is celebrated well during 'school meetings'. The school uses other agencies well to provide support to the small number of pupils who show poor attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably assisted by senior and subject leaders, leads the school well. She has strong support from governors, staff and parents. This has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Subject leaders have a good understanding of teaching throughout the school, monitor their subjects well and are good role models for less experienced teachers. They are fully involved with monitoring teaching across the school and provide excellent feedback to teachers on how they can improve their practice.
- Careful monitoring is in place to tackle any underperformance which has resulted in most year groups and subjects showing a steady increase in progress across the school. Teachers' individual targets are closely linked to accelerating pupils' progress.
- The well planned school curriculum allows pupils lots of opportunities to take part in a wealth of experiences. It tackles discrimination through awareness of a range of cultures. It places a high emphasis on the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with particular emphasis on understanding their own learning needs. The curriculum does not however provide enough opportunities for pupils to write extensively across a range of subjects.

- The school promotes equal opportunities well through interactive whole school assemblies (school meetings) as well as through its admirable charity work with a school in Zambia. The most able and middle ability pupils however are not always challenged well enough to reach the highest standards they are capable of.
- The primary school sports funding is being used well to ensure pupils experience a wide range of activities and to improve teachers' understanding of how to develop pupils' physical skills. Pupils learn team building skills because they are participating in more sporting competitions.
- The Collaborative Partnership of ten schools provides effective support to the school. Extra support through external consultants has also provided adequate support and some challenge to school leaders.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body bring a wealth of experience to their roles. Governors have a good understanding of how to measure the performance of the school. They understand the data gathered about pupils' achievement because they are provided with reports that are clear and helpful.
- Governors make appropriate use of information to plan the use of funding such as the pupil premium and the new sports funding and keep a close check on how both impact on pupils' achievement.
- Governors know about the quality of teaching, how teachers' pay is related to this and how well the school has tackled underperformance. Governors ensure that all safeguarding procedures in school are robust and consistently followed.

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	138818
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	440168

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	363
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Lock
Headteacher	Shelagh Thomson
Date of previous school inspection	Not Applicable
Telephone number	0116 2608150
Fax number	0116 2694308
Email address	admin@merton.leics.sch.uk

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