

Merrydale Junior School

Claydon Road, Leicester, LE5 0PL

Inspection dates

14–15 April 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The governing body, headteacher and other leaders have not brought about sufficient improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement, especially in reading and writing, since the last inspection.
- Leaders of subjects and other leaders have not contributed sufficiently, in the past, to making sure all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' standards in reading and writing are still not high enough and their progress is not consistently good. The standard of work of the most-able pupils is not always good enough, especially in writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils and girls, in particular, have not made the rapid progress that they need to make to catch up with their classmates.
- Teaching requires improvement. Teachers do not consistently use the information that is available to them about pupils' previous achievement to plan challenging work for all groups of pupils.
- Although pupils' work is marked regularly, pupils do not always act on their teachers' guidance and, consequently, do not improve their work as quickly as they should.
- Although pupils understand school rules and behave well around school, a small number does not behave well during lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive.

The school has the following strengths

- Achievement in mathematics is improving rapidly. The majority of pupils make good progress in their understanding of key mathematical ideas and skills.
- Teaching is good in Years 4 and 6 because expectations of what pupils can achieve have increased considerably.
- Parents and carers appreciate the school's caring ethos and the way that it nurtures pupils and ensures that they are very safe.
- The school provides a good range of activities, trips and residential visits that helps to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and gives them variety and enjoyment in lessons.
- Attendance is improving and punctuality is good. Pupils, including those joining the school other than at the usual times, settle quickly and feel part of the school community.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 22 lessons taught by 16 different teachers. Three of these lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, the English and mathematics subject leaders, other leaders, pupils and governors. The lead inspector had a discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed pupils’ work, looked at their exercise books, listened to them read and observed them in two class assemblies.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including the school’s analysis of how well it is doing, information on pupils’ progress, documents related to safeguarding, and key reports and policies. Documentation relating to the care of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs was also reviewed.
- Inspectors evaluated the school’s system for checking teachers’ performance.
- The inspectors talked with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 237 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also analysed 31 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Andrew Stafford, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Needham	Additional Inspector
Vondra Mays	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Merrydale Junior is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are four classes in each of Years 3, 4 and 5, and three classes in Year 6.
- Pupils are grouped by ability for mathematics in Years 4, 5 and 6, and by ability for English in every year group.
- Pupils come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and nearly two thirds speak English as an additional language. An increasing number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English.
- Many more pupils than seen nationally join the school at times other than the usual entry points. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium (the additional funding allocated by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children in the care of the local authority) is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant turnover of staff. Nine new teachers have been appointed, including one newly qualified teacher in September 2014.
- The school works with Challenge Partners, a nationwide organisation that supports schools to improve their performance.
- There is a breakfast club adjacent to the school site, but it is not managed by the governing body and did not form part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers use the information they hold on pupils' current progress to plan work that is both interesting and challenging for all groups of pupils, including the most-able pupils, girls, and disadvantaged pupils
 - teachers place more emphasis on improving pupils' ability to write competently in different styles and for different purposes
 - teachers encourage pupils to read widely, so that they extend their vocabulary and improve their comprehension skills
 - teachers insist that pupils correct and improve their work, as directed by the comments in teachers' marking.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning by ensuring that lessons captivate pupils' interest.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers, including governors, so that they have a greater impact on pupils' achievement, by ensuring that:
 - leaders at all levels use the information the school holds on how well pupils are achieving more effectively to check progress and intervene effectively where it is not good enough
 - the progress of disadvantaged pupils, consistently, matches that of their classmates
 - subject leaders use the information they have collected through recently improved checks on the quality of teaching and learning, to give teachers advice about how to be more effective.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have not improved teaching sufficiently to make it consistently good or ensured that all groups of pupils have made good progress. In addition, they have not improved pupils' attitudes sufficiently, with the result that a small number of pupils still do not behave, or want to learn, as well as they should. Consequently, in 2014, pupils did not make the progress necessary to enable them to reach average standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6, particularly in reading or writing.
- There has been insufficient support for pupils' reading and writing in the past. The curriculum did not provide sufficient reinforcement of writing in other subjects, or provide sufficient challenge to enable all pupils, including girls, to achieve as well as they should.
- Leaders have made improvements in the curriculum a priority so that pupils develop stronger skills in reading, writing and mathematics. The impact of these changes, however, is only just beginning to be seen.
- The school has improved provision for girls by using setting by ability in mathematics to improve achievement. Standards in reading and writing of pupils currently in the school, and particularly in Years 4 and 6, while improving, are doing so more slowly than in mathematics.
- Until recently, leaders of subjects and other leaders have not been sufficiently involved in checking the quality of teaching. They have not provided advice to colleagues particularly about how to improve their planning. They have not contributed sufficiently to checking pupils' progress, particularly that of the most able, girls and disadvantaged pupils. Although subject leaders are now beginning to improve classroom practice and aspects of achievement, especially in mathematics, it is too early for the impact of these leaders' actions to be fully established.
- Pupil premium funding was not used effectively until September 2014 and so disadvantaged pupils did not achieve well enough. Although better management at all levels is ensuring that teaching is more effective, gaps in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils are not closing rapidly enough.
- The headteacher is creating a culture of high expectations of achievement and behaviour. She is committed to improving teaching and her actions to do so are beginning to have a positive effect. Consequently, there is increasing evidence of good teaching in some year groups. Newly qualified teachers and those in the early stages of their careers are supported well. Led by the headteacher, staff are developing higher expectations, both for their own practice and for the standard of work they accept from pupils.
- Good links with Challenge Partners and the local school development group are now being used to help teachers to learn from one another. Staff are supported further by regular training provided by the school directly. These actions are contributing to improving teaching.
- The school's systems for tracking the progress of different groups of pupils have improved recently. Leaders are now able to check that the achievement of all groups is improving and that additional support has the impact intended. Leaders are now able to identify and support any pupil who is underperforming, and the school is providing better equality of opportunity for all pupils. Leaders recognise, however, the importance of embedding these new initiatives so that the gains they have brought can be sustained.
- The local authority is supporting the school in its drive to improve and is working closely with leaders to address weaknesses. The governors have benefited from the training provided for them. The local authority's actions are supporting the school's improvement well.
- The extent to which school development planning is focused on key weaknesses is improving. Leaders' planning now spells out clearly how improvements are to be achieved. Plans identify clearly and specifically what improvement is intended, who is to monitor the action taken and how the impact of that

action is to be assessed. As a result, leaders are able to provide better direction of the school's work and ensure all staff share the same sense of purpose and readiness to make the necessary improvements across the school.

- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lessons on the rule of law raise pupils' awareness of the differences between right and wrong. Fund raising for charities highlights how pupils can help those who are less fortunate. The school uses the local and wider community well to enrich pupils' awareness of other cultures and faiths. The school is improving the breadth of the curriculum – for example, pupils now learn French in all age groups.
- Pupils show a good understanding of the importance of fairness and tolerance of difference, which prepares them well for life in modern British society. The sense of being British is being supported effectively through the school conducting its own election to mirror the current parliamentary election. Pupils' personal development is reflected in their genuine delight when others' academic or sporting achievement is celebrated. Discrimination is not tolerated and pupils are convinced there is none in the school.
- The school uses the sports premium well. It extends opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting competitions and develops staff expertise in gymnastics using the additional funding. The school has made good use of the funding to appoint a specialist sports coach to broaden the range of activities available to pupils and to enhance teachers' own skills. Leaders have reviewed the impact of the funding and found many more pupils are participating in sporting activities that contribute well to their health and well-being.
- The school uses newsletters to keep parents informed, and those who responded to Parent View were positive about all aspects of the school's work. The school has gained the confidence of all groups of parents, for example, through the setting up of the parents' reading group. They confirm that the school is very friendly, caring and supportive of their children.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Leaders, including governors, make sure that these arrangements are implemented fully. The school has carried out checks on all adults to make sure they can work with pupils. Leaders complete thorough risk assessments, covering key aspects of school life, such as educational visits, to keep pupils safe when they take pupils out of school. Consequently, safeguarding of pupils is well assured.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved and is now effective. This is as a result of recent training provided by the local authority. Governors have a better understanding of their roles. Currently, they are providing the necessary level of challenge to leaders to account for the school's performance. They now review the information the school holds on pupils' attainment and progress more closely and challenge leaders to explain any weaknesses. However, the governing body still relies heavily on a small number of active members. Governors are energetically carrying out further recruitment to address this issue. The governing body is currently supporting the headteacher in improving teaching and achievement. Governors have become more aware of the quality of teaching. They know how performance management is being used to improve teaching and to tackle underperformance. They have set targets for the headteacher and all teachers that link salary increases and promotions to the progress pupils make. Governors review carefully the financial position of the school. They are becoming more aware of the effectiveness of how resources are spent to help pupils eligible for pupil premium support, but this remains an area for improvement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although the conduct of the large majority at break and lunchtime is good, a few are not consistently positive about their learning in class and this hinders their progress. During the inspection, inspectors saw incidents of low-level disruption. The teachers dealt with these incidents appropriately, but they distracted both teachers and pupils. Pupils said that most of their

classmates behave well, but a few do not always behave well enough.

- The school keeps thorough records of behaviour, which confirm that a small number of pupils do not behave well enough. The number of incidents recorded is decreasing; action to improve behaviour, through a policy of rewards and consequences, is having a positive effect.
- In lessons, most pupils behave according to the rules. Most listen to instructions and settle quickly to carry out work. They understand established routines, and many complete tasks to the best of their ability. On occasion, a few do not try as hard as they could and this hinders their progress.
- Pupils are happy to come to school. Attendance is improving and most parents say that they feel their children are happy at school. Pupils wear the school uniform proudly, are keen to take responsibility, and understand the school's expectations for behaviour.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming as they move around school. They have good manners, and positive relationships with staff.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and parents agree that they are safe in school. Pupils know how to stay safe, including when using the internet, and they understand how to deal with situations where they might feel at risk.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils understand what it means to be unkind to someone and they are aware of different kinds of bullying, including name-calling. They feel confident that the school would deal with any concerns they might have.
- The school provides good opportunities for pupils, and particularly for disadvantaged pupils, to develop their social, sporting and other skills in a safe and stimulating environment. This situation applies in school at lunchtime, and at the end of the school day, in the after-school clubs.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Staff have received appropriate training and know how to deal with incidents, should they arise. The school has good systems to control access to the school and these are implemented consistently.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is not yet enough good teaching to make sure pupils close the gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly in reading and writing. Teachers do not consistently use the information they collect about pupils' attainment and progress to plan challenging work for all abilities, especially for the most able. Although there is some good teaching resulting in faster progress, this year, this is not yet the case in all year groups.
- Pupils have not made good progress over time, particularly in reading and writing. Some pupils are currently making better progress because teachers, for example in Years 4 and 6, have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. The information the school collects about pupils' progress shows that it has increased rapidly in these year groups during this academic year. Inspection findings, including scrutiny of pupils' work confirmed these improvements, but also that progress is not yet good in other year groups.
- The teaching of reading and writing requires improvement. Not all teachers expect enough of their pupils. The school has introduced a daily reading session for half an hour at the start of every day to improve reading standards. This is providing more opportunities for pupils to read a range of books and develop confidence, for example, in their ability to deduce and infer. As a result, some pupils, but still not enough, are now making at least the progress they should.
- Activities in writing have been undemanding in the past. The tasks set have not motivated pupils sufficiently to aspire to higher standards and this has affected the progress pupils have made over time.

The work set now, for example, where pupils' writing is based on their studies of stories, interests them and holds their attention. Consequently, they are taking more pride in their work and achievement is improving.

- The teaching of mathematics is more effective because teachers, in all year groups, have higher expectations. They use their secure subject knowledge to make sure that learning builds well on previously acquired skills. The frequent use of problem-solving tasks in everyday situations, to interest and engage pupils, accelerates their progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and often provide positive comments about what they have to do to improve. However, some pupils do not regularly act on teachers' comments in order to improve their work and not all consistently aspire to better achievement.
- Teaching for pupils who speak English as an additional language leads to them making progress at a similar rate to that of their classmates. The school focuses strongly on developing these pupils' vocabulary. Recent arrivals into the school integrate quickly because they are supported well through the early stages of learning English.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution when leading small-group activities for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. These pupils respond positively in those sessions and make faster progress because the work they are set is tailored to help them to take the next step in learning.
- Teaching makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils work well together, study a range of faiths, consider what is right and wrong, and take part in musical, sporting, scientific and technological activities in lessons and outside the classroom.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 was below average in both 2013 and 2014. In 2014, Year 6 pupils were roughly one and a half terms behind others nationally. Despite the significant number of staff changes, leaders did not track progress carefully enough, or take sufficient action to address underperformance to ensure the good progress of all groups of pupils.
- The school's information confirms that the progress pupils make in reading and writing is not as strong as in mathematics in most year groups. However, evidence in some pupils' books shows that they are getting more opportunities to practise applying their skills in writing in different subjects and topics. This change is improving progress and helping to raise standards for all pupils. Pupils are getting more opportunities to read widely and apply their comprehension skills in writing, for example, when reviewing the books they enjoy. This practice is supporting better progress, but it is not yet consistently good across the school.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils. The school's information and observations of the extra sessions provided for these pupils show that most of the younger pupils in this group are progressing more quickly. Careful monitoring of the support provided by teachers and teaching assistants is leading to better-targeted teaching that is helping them to make faster progress. These improvements have yet to have a marked impact on some older pupils' achievement.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to that of their classmates. Similarly, pupils who join the school other than at the usual times settle quickly and receive additional help, so that they make similar progress to other pupils.
- The most-able pupils do not always achieve as well as they should. The proportion of pupils in Year 6 who gained the higher level 5 in reading, writing, or mathematics in 2014 was below average. The information the school collects shows that the progress that the most-able pupils have made this year is faster than in the recent past. The more-challenging work that they are set currently is promoting better progress in some year groups. However, their achievement over time has been uneven and sometimes insufficient.

- In the 2014 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, disadvantaged pupils' attainment was behind their classmates by one term in reading and writing, and by over two terms in mathematics. In comparison with other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were three and a half terms behind in reading and approximately two and a half terms behind in writing and mathematics. The school's own information, confirmed by inspection findings, indicates that disadvantaged pupils are currently making better progress and gaps in attainment are closing across all year groups, although not rapidly enough.

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	462009

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	362
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Gibson
Headteacher	Catriona Mugglestone
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2013
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