

# Mercer's Wood Academy

Ropery Road, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 2PD

## Inspection dates

9–10 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Outstanding</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stages 1 and 2 is inconsistent. Therefore, not all pupils make the progress they are capable of, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Teachers' questioning skills are not consistently effective. Sometimes teachers move learning on too quickly before checking all pupils are secure in their understanding.
- Teachers do not consistently use the information they have about pupils' abilities to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging.
- Curriculum planning and teaching do not always ensure that learning activities stimulate the interest and enthusiasm of pupils.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics are new to their roles and it is too soon to evaluate the impact of their work. New approaches to teaching and assessment are not yet sufficiently established in reading and mathematics.
- The local governing body has not been as effective as it should have been in holding school leaders to account.

### The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed head of school, with the support of the executive headteacher, leads the school well. The leadership team is cohesive, committed and ambitious for securing school improvement.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and leaders have successfully established a culture of vigilance. Pupils say that they feel safe. Parents and carers strongly agree.
- Children achieve well in the early years. This is because of the strong leadership and engaging curriculum which enthuse children about their learning.
- Leaders' decisive actions have led to rapid improvements in pupils' behaviour. The 'Treehouse' nurture centre has made a positive difference in supporting the needs of vulnerable pupils.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stages 1 and 2, and thereby pupils' progress, by ensuring that all teachers:
  - accurately and consistently use assessment information so that learning activities are matched to the needs and abilities of pupils, particularly in providing greater challenge so that more pupils can attain at the higher standard
  - sustain high expectations of what all pupils are capable of attaining
  - develop stronger skills in questioning and consistently checking pupils' understanding before moving on to the next stages of learning
  - plan learning which engages pupils' interests and enthusiasm.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - local governance challenges school leaders and holds them more stringently to account
  - the expertise of subject leaders is further developed so that they are fully effective in sustaining improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed head of school leads the school well. His leadership is valued and respected by staff. Strongly supported by the executive headteacher, senior leaders and trustees, the head of school communicates a clear vision for the future direction and success of the school. Leaders are working with determination, often under difficult circumstances, to improve the school.
- Leaders and trustees have an accurate and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have used this information to inform clearly defined priorities to realise rapid improvement in the early years and the teaching of phonics. They have prioritised improving the teaching of reading comprehension skills and mathematical reasoning. The quality of teaching is improving, although it is not yet securely good across the school.
- The ethos and culture of the school are positive and underpinned by a well-understood set of core values related to well-being, engagement, aspiration and resilience. The morale of the staff is positive and they are supportive of the school's aspirations. The school is a welcoming and attractive learning environment.
- The leadership of the early years is highly effective and aspirational. Children in the early years achieve well, due to the creative and purposeful design of the curriculum which engages the interest and enthusiasm of children. Expectations are high and children are responsive to them.
- Pastoral leadership is a strength of the school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils, managing behaviour and attendance are effective and driven by a cohesive team of staff. Initiatives such as the 'Treehouse' nurture centre have made a positive difference to the support provided for vulnerable pupils at risk of disengaging from learning.
- Leaders have taken determined action to ensure that teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is accurate, and this is closely monitored. Since his appointment, the head of school arranges regular opportunities to review pupils' progress. Leaders ensure that pupil assessment across the key subjects is standardised within the school and across the trust.
- Leaders have ensured that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is having a positive impact on pupil outcomes by the end of key stage 2. Barriers to learning are identified and leaders have invested in additional staffing to meet the needs of this group of pupils. Leaders have taken action to ensure that the use of the pupil premium funding is supporting disadvantaged pupils across all year groups. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this on the quality of teaching and pupil outcomes overall.
- The leadership of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is strong. The specific needs of pupils are well understood and the coordinator for special educational needs (SENCo) has a sufficiently deep knowledge of pupils' specific needs to ensure that they are addressed. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work found that these pupils are making better progress than has been the case in recent years.
- The leadership of the curriculum is strengthening. Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum at both key stages 1 and 2 to ensure that all pupils learn from a broad and

balanced range of subjects. There is scope, however, to further ensure that the new curriculum consistently engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm.

- The leadership of the additional funding for physical education (PE) and sports premium is effective. This funding is spent on additional PE and playground resources, sports coaching and increasing participation in sporting activities through, for example, 'Commando Joe'. As a result, an increasing proportion of pupils are beginning to participate in sport-related activities on a more frequent basis. In addition, the 'Bikeability' initiative has enabled half of the pupils in key stage 2 to be able to confidently ride a bike.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well. The many and wide-ranging displays throughout the school creatively showcase a variety of themes, including anti-bullying, a celebration of different cultures through pupils' spoken languages and 'food around the world'. Pupils also develop a good understanding of fundamental British values including tolerance and mutual respect.
- Pupils are appreciative of the extra-curricular opportunities on offer, which include football, sign language and choir. Pupils also say that they would like more of these opportunities.
- The trust has provided effective support in the development of subject leadership, particularly in English and mathematics. This has contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through the provision of tailored professional development. However, leaders have yet to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes are consistently good across all year groups.

## **Governance of the school**

- Members of the local governing body are well supported by trustees and have a range of relevant skills and knowledge. They are committed to the school and are ambitious for the future. Governors make regular visits to the school so that they better understand the impact of leaders' work.
- Governors and members of the trust work closely with each other to support many aspects of the school's development, including the review of the curriculum, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Membership of the governing body has undergone significant change since 2017. Current governors are benefiting from training so that they are in a better position to challenge leaders. Despite the support of trustees, at present governors are not as independently effective as they could be in their evaluation of the school's performance and in holding senior leaders to account.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have embedded a culture of vigilance and parents say that any issues that arise are promptly addressed. The overwhelming majority of parents who spoke with inspectors or responded to Ofsted's online survey agreed that their children feel safe, happy and well looked after at the

school.

- The checks made on the recruitment of staff are secure and well administered. Effective procedures are in place to ensure that all visitors to the school are suitably vetted.
- All staff understand what to do if they identify any concerns they have about a pupil's well-being. This is because they receive regular training and updates.
- A cohesive team of staff, who are appropriately skilled, provide highly effective support for the designated safeguarding lead. Staff who oversee aspects of safeguarding, behaviour and attendance work closely together and meet regularly to share information. School records are thorough and meticulously organised. These records demonstrate that timely action is taken to keep pupils safe, including working with external agencies and with parents to ensure that pupils receive the right support when it is needed.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and can talk about this with confidence. For example, pupils are taught about online safety, road safety and personal safety. They recognise the importance of keeping personal information confidential. Pupils say that they feel safe in school.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because there are inconsistencies between different year groups in key stages 1 and 2. Teachers have good subject knowledge but do not always use it well enough to inspire and enthuse pupils in their learning.
- Teachers do not consistently use information about pupils' prior attainment to ensure that work is set at the right level, particularly for middle and higher ability pupils. When this occurs, pupils' concentration wanes and attitudes are less positive.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough. Sometimes the questioning of pupils is not effective in ensuring that they have fully understood the subject content. Some pupils who spoke with inspectors during visits to lessons said that they did not always feel confident about what good learning is.
- Sometimes teachers move the learning on too quickly before checking that all pupils have understood. Conversely, some pupils who are ready to learn at a greater depth are not consistently enabled to do so. As a consequence, the progress that pupils make is reduced.
- Leaders have recently implemented a new feedback policy for pupils' learning. While this policy is in its early days, inspectors' observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work found that the school's expectations are not consistently applied. As a result, some pupils are unsure how to improve their learning.
- In the more effective examples of teaching seen, pupils were given clear instructions which they followed promptly. They were able to work well on their own or with others in sharing information and ideas. Inspectors observed this, for example, in phonics at key stage 1 and in the development of reading skills in Year 6.
- Subject leaders have recently improved the quality of learning resources, particularly

for English and mathematics. External support from within the trust has also provided teachers with greater support and direction. This includes the implementation of 'learning questions' to provide a clearer start to all lessons. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of this additional level of support on pupils' outcomes across all years in key stages 1 and 2.

- The teaching of phonics is effective because learning activities are closely matched to the needs and abilities of pupils. In these lessons, teachers provide close support for pupils, enabling them to develop their wider reading skills. Pupils who read to inspectors were able to use their phonics knowledge to pronounce unfamiliar words.
- The support provided by additional adults is effective. Their actions are helping to improve the progress made by pupils, particularly those with SEND. Inspectors observed how activities and questioning were successfully adapted to meet the needs of pupils and keep them focused on their learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the school's values and fundamental British values such as tolerance and mutual respect. This is reflected in the positive attitudes that pupils display in lessons and during social time. Pupils enjoy holding positions of responsibility to uphold these values, such as the 'mini-police' who support the school's expectations for respectful play. Pupils also said they enjoyed exploring different faiths in Year 4, including participating in the construction of a gurdwara as part of a topic on Sikhism.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. For example, through physical education, pupils learn about the importance of teamwork and cooperation. Pupils also learn about different cultures including, for example, life in Ghana. Pupils' high levels of engagement with this topic enabled them to win first prize in a regional food festival competition about 'foods around the world'.
- The pastoral care in the school is strong. Pupils know who they can talk to if they have any concerns. Leaders have ensured that, through the 'Treehouse' nurture provision, the school is able to meet the mental and emotional health and well-being needs of pupils.
- School records show that incidents of bullying are few. Pupils are taught about the different types of bullying and they can talk confidently about them. Pupils say that they are confident that staff would deal with any occurrence effectively. A clear majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's survey agreed.
- Pupils describe the school as 'friendly'. Leaders have recently introduced 'feel good Fridays' to raise parent awareness about the personal development of pupils at the school. Parents speak highly of the school and a very large majority of parents would recommend it.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have recently implemented a new approach to managing behaviour. This is applied consistently by staff. The large majority of pupils behave well in lessons and in the playground. Staff say that behaviour has improved significantly over the last year and pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed this. The majority of parents agree that the behaviour of pupils is well managed.
- Leaders have also successfully introduced the 'Treehouse' nurture centre to support pupils who exhibit more challenging behaviour. Consequently, the proportion of fixed-term and repeat exclusions, which has been high in the past, has decreased markedly. The clear majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey agreed that pupils' behaviour is well managed.
- Pupils are happy to be at the school and they conduct themselves well, in their lessons and on the playground. They wear their uniform smartly and follow instructions from their teachers promptly. During playtime, pupils take responsibility to tidy up the outdoor resources as a matter of routine. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors alike.
- In lessons, pupils generally collaborate well in sharing their thinking and ideas. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are positive. In a very few lessons observed, pupils lost focus; this occurred where the work was not well matched to their needs or they were not secure in their understanding.
- Leaders monitor attendance of pupils very closely and ensure that the school's expectations are communicated clearly with parents. Overall, pupil attendance has improved, including for disadvantaged pupils, despite remaining below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has also decreased due to the well-targeted support and, when necessary, decisive action taken by school leaders. Levels of persistent absence, however, remain high. The attendance and health care leader works effectively with families to improve attendance and leaders are taking all the reasonable steps to address this issue.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Where teaching is most effective, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and in other subjects. However, this is not consistent in all classes across key stages 1 and 2. Sometimes pupils are not set work that is challenging enough for them to deepen their thinking and apply their understanding to more difficult work. Some pupils say that their work can sometimes be 'too easy', whereas other pupils lack confidence in knowing how to make good progress. As a consequence, the proportion of pupils attaining at the higher standard, especially in writing and mathematics, is lower than it should be.
- In 2018, progress was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics and this has been the case for the last three years. However, published information shows that the attainment and progress of middle-attaining pupils in reading was well below the national average.



- Pupils across all year groups read frequently and fluently. However, there is some variability in the extent to which pupils fully comprehend the texts that they are reading. There is also variability in how frequently the quality and depth of pupils' reading skills is checked by staff, particularly for the most able readers capable of greater depth. Leaders and staff have focused on raising standards in reading and the progress of pupils is improving.
- As a result of the effective teaching of phonics, the majority of pupils typically achieve the required standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. For those pupils who do not achieve the required standard in Year 1, almost all of them do so by the end of Year 2.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is good, particularly in writing and mathematics, because of the close support these pupils receive from their teachers and from additional supporting adults. Similarly, pupils with SEND are making better progress because of the close nature of the support these pupils receive.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Most children enter the early years with knowledge and skills below those which are typical for their age.
- The leadership of the early years is strong. Staff know the needs of the children very well due to highly effective arrangements for transition from families and nurseries. Assessment information informs teachers' planning and ensures that the individual needs of children are met and this is closely monitored. As a result, all groups of children make good progress from their starting points and some make even more accelerated progress. Children are well prepared for starting Year 1.
- The early years leader has a secure understanding of the strengths of the provision and priorities for future development. Funding for children in receipt of the early years pupil premium is used well to provide additional support, resources and training for staff.
- Children engage in a wide range of well-planned learning activities which flow seamlessly across the indoor and outdoor provision. Levels of engagement are high because resources are stimulating and well laid out so that they are easily accessible, increasing children's independence. Staff ensure that every opportunity is taken to develop high-quality interactions with children, through effective questioning and playing alongside children.
- The early years environment is exciting and vibrant. Children say that they love coming to school and they know what they want to learn and why. Examples of the activities include making cakes in the dough area on their birthday, freeing aliens from blocks of ice and hunting for hidden shapes in the outside provision.
- Teachers have high expectations and the quality of their planning ensures that all pupils are challenged. Specific interventions are used to best effect to accelerate and support pupils' learning. In phonics, for example, a careful balance of teacher-led and child-led learning ensures that children can identify and apply age-appropriate skills.
- The behaviour of children is excellent. They are encouraged through warm and positive



role modelling by staff to be kind and considerate.

- Partnerships with parents have improved as a result of recent initiatives introduced in the autumn term to share pupils' learning. Parents are very positive about the provision that their children receive.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective and all statutory welfare requirements are met.

## School details

Unique reference number	139332
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10086768

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Rachel Ashmore
Headteacher	Kieran Ola (head of school) Sue Wilson (executive headteacher)
Telephone number	01427 612 572
Website	<a href="http://www.talloaksacademy.co.uk">www.talloaksacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:kieran.ola@talloaksacademy.co.uk">kieran.ola@talloaksacademy.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	17–18 September 2014

## Information about this school

- This school is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The school is part of the Tall Oaks Academy Trust. Directors of the trust are the appropriate authority with delegated responsibilities to the local governing body.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2018. The executive headteacher, who is also a member of the board of trustees, oversees the three schools currently in the trust.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 parts of lessons both across the school and in the early years. Some observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. During these visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with three groups of pupils more formally, listened to pupils reading and met with pupils informally during lunch and playtime.
- Inspectors met with a range of school leaders, including the executive headteacher and head of school and other leaders with responsibility for the quality of teaching, the curriculum, early years, pupil premium and sports premium. Inspectors also met with the trust's coordinator for the provision of pupils with SEND, the trust's attendance and healthcare officer and the designated leaders for safeguarding.
- The lead inspector met with two governors, the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the local governing body.
- The lead inspector also checked the school's single central register and the procedures for recruiting staff.
- A range of documents were scrutinised including: the school's self-evaluation; improvement planning; pupils' performance information; a sample of pupils' books; the minutes of the local governing body meetings; pupil premium and sports premium strategies; curriculum planning; monitoring information for attendance and behaviour and a range of policies including those for safeguarding and behaviour.
- The lead inspector also evaluated the 20 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors also spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day and considered the school's own survey of parents' views.

## Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joanna Hall	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Hawkes	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2019