

Inspection of Mercer's Wood Academy

Ropery Road, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 2PD

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Mercer's Wood Academy vision is that pupils strive to be 'the best version of ourselves'. Leaders have worked tirelessly to make this a reality. They have high expectations of pupils from the day they start school. Leaders want pupils to know that their futures are full of possibilities. As a result of the caring and calm school environment, pupils thrive.

Pupils are happy at the school. One pupil described the school as 'the best school on the planet'. Staff and pupils enjoy positive relationships based on mutual respect. Adults are kind to pupils. Pupils know that the grown-ups in school will help them if they are worried or upset. Pupils say that bullying is not tolerated, but if it happens a member of staff will sort it out quickly.

In lessons and at play, pupils behave well. They help each other and speak to each other politely. The school's behaviour system is clear and well known and understood by pupils. They say their teachers use it fairly.

Pupils, staff, parents and governors are proud to be part of the school. Everyone agrees that the school has improved. One parent commented, 'This is a school that goes the extra mile.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's detailed curriculum sets out precisely what pupils need to learn, and when, in each subject. Key knowledge has been carefully sequenced, from the early years to Year 6. Teachers make regular assessments to check that pupils remember this important knowledge. Pupils understand how regular 'retrieval practice' helps them to keep prior learning fresh in their minds. Pupils can talk about what they have learned in detail. For example, pupils recall significant events in the Tudor period of history. They remember that Henry VIII was a king during this time, that he had six wives, that his daughter became Queen Elizabeth I, and they remember the date on which he died.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They want these pupils to access the same curriculum as the rest of their classmates. Leaders make sure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified quickly so that the best support can be given. Teachers know that if they get it right for these pupils, they can succeed and achieve well.

Right from the beginning of school, reading is given a high profile. Books are everywhere in the school. Each day starts with a story time for most pupils. Pupils in the early years vote for the book they would like their teacher to read to them at snack time. Many pupils talk about their favourite stories and authors with enthusiasm. Phonics is taught systematically. Great care is taken to make sure that pupils learn all of the sounds they need to know to read fluently. However, for a small number of pupils, the books they are given to read do not match the sounds

that they know. This limits the success of these pupils. They become discouraged and fail to regard themselves as successful readers.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about a wide range of issues that prepare them well for life in modern Britain. They learn how to stay healthy, both physically and mentally, how to stay safe on the road riding a bicycle and about a range of faiths and religions. Leaders have clearly identified the characteristics they want pupils to develop. Pupils learn about British values and understand how they affect their everyday lives. For example, they know that freedom of speech means they have a right to have their say. Pupils learn to respect people from lots of different backgrounds. These important personal qualities were exemplified in the conduct of pupils during a memorial assembly for Queen Elizabeth II. Pupils showed their respect for Her Majesty by quietly and thoughtfully laying flowers at a tree they had planted to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee.

Leaders' strong values and high ambitions are shared by governors and trustees. They keep a close eye on how well the school is doing and hold leaders to account. They have identified that a significant number of pupils are persistently absent from school. They know that until these pupils attend school regularly, they will not do as well as they can.

Staff appreciate the training they receive from the trust. They say that leaders consider their well-being and ensure that they have a manageable workload.

Together, leaders, staff, governors and the trust have successfully secured significant school improvement over recent times.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive a thorough and well-organised schedule of safeguarding training. They know how to spot the signs that pupils may be at risk. If staff are worried about a pupil, they pass their concerns on swiftly. No concern is too small to be noted. Leaders follow up any concerns raised with determination to make sure that pupils and their families get the help they need.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe. They understand what a healthy relationship looks like and how to keep themselves safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- For a small number of pupils, the books they are given to read are not closely matched to the sounds they know. As a result, pupils do not experience success as they read and do not learn to read as quickly as they could. Leaders should ensure that the reading books given to pupils enable them to read with fluency and ever-increasing confidence.
- There are a significant number of pupils who do not attend well and are persistently absent. They miss considerable teaching time and are at risk of not being well prepared for the next stage in their education. Leaders must work closely with parents and carers to ensure that pupils attend school on every possible day.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	139332
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10241084
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	172
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lee Wallhead
Headteacher	Kieran Ola
Website	https://mercerswoodacademy.eschools.co.uk/web
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Mercer's Wood Academy is part of Tall Oaks Trust.
- At the time of the inspection, an interim headteacher was in post.
- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.
- The school offers before- and after-school care.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the interim headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with two

representatives of the trust, including the chief executive officer, five trustees, including the chair of the trust, and the chair of governors.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, art and design and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and pupils from the lessons visited. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead and reviewed documents relating to safeguarding, including the single central record. Inspectors also spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding in school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at playtime and lunchtime and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors considered parents' and carers' responses to the Ofsted free-text service and Ofsted Parent View. The responses of staff and pupils to Ofsted's surveys were also considered.

Inspection team

Caroline Poole, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ben Waldram

Ofsted Inspector

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