

Inspection of Mercenfeld Primary School

Oakfield Avenue, Markfield, Leicestershire LE67 9WG

Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2023

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

The headteacher of this school is Kirstie Randle. The school is part of Bradgate Education Partnership multi-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for the running of the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Gareth Nelmes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Cotton.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend Mercenfeld Primary School. They list the many things they like about their school with enthusiasm. One pupil said: 'I think it must be the best school in England.'

Pupils love to learn. They try their best in lessons and give teachers their full attention. From the start of school, children in the early years learn how important it is to listen carefully. They respond promptly when their teacher reminds them to 'get your listening ears on'. Pupils know the school rules and stick to them. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. Adults model kindness and respect. Pupils follow their example. The school is a safe and happy place to work and play.

The school places a well-considered emphasis on preparing pupils for the next stage in their education and future lives. Pupils' character development is central to the work of the school and runs through every part of the school day. There is a clear ambition that all pupils will do well and achieve their very best. The school's motto is 'striving for excellence'. This is lived out by the staff and pupils at this rapidly improving school.

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

Increased expectations of what pupils can achieve have driven the school's approach to curriculum development. Curriculum plans identify the important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. The school has ensured that each subject is led by a skilled curriculum leader. They are ambitious that they can improve the curriculum in their subject even further, particularly in the foundation subjects. Work has begun to review curriculum plans so that the intended key knowledge is precisely identified and to check that it is taught in the right order. This vital work is not yet complete in all subjects.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They understand the importance of building pupils' knowledge in bite-sized chunks. This is exemplified in physical education (PE), where Year 2 pupils are introduced to the concept of attacking and defending before learning about 'zonal marking' in Year 4.

Teachers understand the importance of checking that pupils remember the intended learning. There are well-established assessment systems in English and mathematics. In the early years, the curriculum is adapted successfully because teachers have a clear understanding of children's strengths and where they need more help. However, in the foundation subjects, there is still work to do to ensure that the approaches used to make these checks are helping teachers to address gaps in pupils' knowledge or to spot misconceptions pupils may have.

The school identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) without delay. Every effort is made to remove barriers so that pupils with SEND can

learn well. They learn alongside their peers. They do well because teachers make the right adaptations for them.

Reading is a priority. Pupils love to read and listen to stories. They are able to name their favourite books. Children in the early years enjoy voting for the book they want their teacher to read at story time. Year 6 librarians run the school library, and each class visits the local library next door to the school.

Staff help pupils to master phonics quickly. Pupils who are at risk of falling behind receive targeted support to help them to keep up. The books that pupils are given to read are well matched to the sounds they know. Pupils develop a secure knowledge of phonics. This provides them with a firm foundation to become fluent and confident readers.

Pupils' personal development is exemplary. The curriculum extends far beyond academic achievement. Every pupil is provided with a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills and talents through music, drama and sport. Pupils learn about inspirational people. They complete 'missions' that help them to develop empathy, self-awareness and to work as a team. They learn about different faiths and cultures beyond the local area. Pupils show high levels of respect and tolerance for others.

The school is well supported by the school's local advisory board and the multi-academy trust. The trust has played a significant role in the work that has been done to improve the school. Everyone agrees that the school is greatly improved. Staff are confident that the right changes have been made. However, they say that the pace of change and increased workload have taken a toll on their well-being.

Parents are full of praise for the school. One parent said: 'The school has gone from strength to strength.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is under review in some subjects to ensure that it identifies precisely and succinctly what pupils need to know and remember, including the order in which this knowledge should be taught. This work is not complete. In some subjects, the current curriculum does not meet the needs of all pupils. The school must complete curriculum reviews of all subjects to ensure that the right adaptations have been made.
- Assessment in the foundation subjects is not fully developed. It is not clear how well the information gathered is used to inform future planning, to close gaps in pupils' knowledge or to address misconceptions. The school should establish a

manageable approach to assessment in the foundation subjects that is used effectively by staff.

- While staff agree that the changes made to improve the school were much needed and are supportive of the actions taken, many teaching staff say that their workload has increased significantly. Their well-being has not always been fully considered as this work has been completed. Going forward, the school should balance ambition to improve with the right level of consideration for staff's work-life balance.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139441
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10288342
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	261
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stephen Cotton
Headteacher	Kirstie Randle
Website	www.mercenfeld.bepschools.org
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 June 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Bradgate Education Partnership multi-academy trust.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed.
- 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and other senior leaders. A meeting was held with three representatives of the multi-academy trust and two members of the local advisory board.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, PE and religious education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils from the lessons visited and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector held a further meeting to discuss the curriculum with subject leaders for science, art and design, and computing.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 3 were observed reading to a member of staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour at various times during the school day, including in lessons, around the school and at playtime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. Account was taken of the responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also spoke with groups of pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Caroline Poole, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Janis Warren

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Monaghan

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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