

# Mercenfeld Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119937
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327155
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Don Mason

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–10
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	270
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Spriason
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kirk Hayles
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 October 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Oakfield Avenue Markfield LE67 9WG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01530 243151
<b>Fax number</b>	01530 245708

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<b>Age group</b>	4–10
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The majority of pupils are from White British families. A small percentage come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average overall but varies considerably from year to year. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is for children in Reception. The school has received the Active Mark, Healthy Schools' Award and a Football Association charter mark. The headteacher was appointed four terms ago. A new senior management team has recently been established and several members of staff have taken on new responsibilities. Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 5.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is an improving school because the headteacher and new leadership team are making changes that are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. As a result, standards are beginning to rise. The great majority of parents express strong support for the school, many sharing the view of one who stated, 'I am very happy with the care and education that my children receive at Mercenfeld School.' The pupils' good personal development is reflected in their high levels of self-confidence and the positive attitudes they display in school and in the playground. Their development is promoted by the very good care that adults provide. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure and know that someone will help them if there is a problem. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 5 are average. Children enter the Reception classes with levels of attainment that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 working securely within the nationally expected levels. Progress from Year 1 to Year 5 is satisfactory. Achievement is no better than satisfactory overall because, for some time, not all pupils have made as much progress as they should. Standards in writing continue to lag behind those in other subjects and more able pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Girls often outperform boys in reading and writing. These weaknesses are gradually being remedied because the school is using its new procedures for checking pupil progress to ensure that those in danger of not making at least expected progress are identified at an early stage and provided with appropriate support. The success of this work is illustrated by the school's receipt of a local authority award acknowledging a significant improvement between 2006 and 2008 in the percentage of pupils making at least expected progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and often reach higher standards than similar pupils nationally. This is because of the very good attention paid to their needs and the excellent support they receive from highly motivated teaching assistants.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is improving, especially in English and mathematics, because teachers are using the detailed information they now have about their pupils' achievements to set work which matches their ability more accurately, ensuring that more able pupils are appropriately challenged. Pupils are becoming more enthusiastic writers and boys are responding well to new 'boy-friendly' topics and reading material. The curriculum is satisfactory and well enriched by a wide range of visits, visitors, sporting activities and some specialist teaching. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through the school council and by taking on responsibilities in school such as Junior Road Safety Officers and Play Organisers. They are also involved in local community and fundraising activities.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Recent improvement has been greatly influenced by the very strong leadership of the headteacher, who is determined to maintain the existing strengths of the school whilst improving achievement and standards. Senior staff and subject leaders are developing their leadership roles. Whilst they successfully support their colleagues in a variety of ways they are not yet sufficiently involved in formal systems for checking the school's performance. These are mainly undertaken by the headteacher. The improvements being made, the commitment of all staff to improving standards and the local authority award for improving progress all point to the school's good capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Close links with parents/carers and local nursery providers, and good induction procedures, ensure that children settle quickly into the Reception classes. They grow into self-confident, enthusiastic learners who are happy to talk to visitors about their work. They make satisfactory progress in their learning, especially in personal development. The provision for indoor activities is good and there is a satisfactory balance between adult-led activities and those which children choose for themselves. However, the children are not able to spend enough time outside and the quality of the activities does not extend their learning as well as those provided indoors. Although the relationships between adults and children are very good, the direct teaching of children is satisfactory overall, partly because the pace of lessons is sometimes slow and children occasionally spend too long sitting listening to the teacher. At these times, teaching assistants are not always used to best effect. On other occasions, they interact well with children and promote their learning through effective questioning. Leadership is satisfactory. It promotes the children's welfare particularly well.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Use the information gained from the new assessment procedures to ensure that all pupils, particularly boys and more able pupils, make the best possible progress, especially in writing.
- Develop the leadership role of senior teachers and subject leaders, especially in the area of formally checking how well the school is doing.
- Increase the time that children in the Reception classes spend outdoors and improve the quality of the activities provided there, so as to enhance all aspects of their learning.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

The results of national tests show that standards at the end of Year 2 have been broadly average for some years, with an improvement in writing and mathematics in 2008. Teacher assessment indicates that standards at the end of Year 5 are broadly average, highest in reading, average in mathematics and weakest in writing. Using its new systems for assessing and keeping track of pupils' progress, the school is now able to identify pupils who are making slow progress and provide them with appropriate support. Pupils of all abilities work, from time to time, with teaching assistants, in carefully planned activities. Some one-to-one tuition has been introduced and this has proved to be particularly successful. As a result, pupil achievement, which is satisfactory, is beginning to improve. The school recognises the need to continue this work to ensure that standards rise, especially in writing, so\* that the gap between girls' and boys' attainment narrows and that more able pupils make the progress they should. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a consequence of the well-established systems in place to identify need and provide appropriate support.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall although the pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity of modern Britain is less well developed. Very good relationships and high expectations from adults ensure that pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. They are cooperative, polite and friendly. Despite occasional lapses, pupils behave very well and their good attendance is an indication of their enjoyment of school. They have a good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives and a growing understanding of how to care for the environment. High levels of self-confidence and self-esteem and sound basic skills provide pupils with satisfactory preparation for the next stage in their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is improving and good examples, in English and mathematics, were observed during the inspection. As a consequence, the rate of pupils' progress is increasing, with a corresponding improvement in standards. It is improving because teachers are using assessment information to plan lessons and to advise pupils about their achievements and what they have to do to improve. This is particularly the case in English, where the gap between boys' and girls' attainment is beginning to diminish. Generally, lessons are well planned and well delivered, and there is a good balance between the time teachers spend talking to the whole class and the time pupils have to work on activities at their different ability levels. The school recognises that there is work still to be done to ensure that the best features of teaching are consistently seen in all lessons, especially in subjects other than English and mathematics. Teachers have begun, for example, to use stickers in pupils' exercise books, which explain the purpose of the lesson and tell the pupils what they have to do to be successful. However, this excellent strategy is not fully exploited because the expectations for middle and higher ability pupils are sometimes too similar.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum enables pupils to make satisfactory progress in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Standards in writing are improving because teachers are successfully developing opportunities to promote writing in many subjects. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and understanding of how to lead healthy lives. One of the growing strengths of the curriculum is the quality of extra support which is provided for pupils who are identified as making slow progress. As a result, more pupils are now making at least the progress they should. Special events such as 'Apple Day' and 'French Day', and specialist teaching in art, sport and music, enrich the curriculum. These activities and a good well-supported range of after-school clubs enhance the pupils' enjoyment and personal development.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Pupils, including the small percentage from minority ethnic backgrounds, thrive in this inclusive, welcoming school because of the high levels of care they receive from adults who know them very well. Special needs staff go to great lengths to identify pupils' needs, provide appropriate support and, where necessary, seek advice from outside agencies. This support is a strength of the school and much appreciated by parents. The requirements for safeguarding pupils are fully met. Attendance is closely monitored, and work to achieve ambitious targets ensures that absence is kept to a minimum. New procedures to improve the guidance offered to pupils about their achievements and what they need to do to improve their work are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning. New 'Learning Logs' are promoting an enthusiasm for homework and further enhancing home/school links. The best marking is to be found in writing where it is giving pupils clear advice about how to improve their work, rather than simply telling them that they have achieved the purpose of the lesson.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Recent improvements are largely due to the strong leadership of the relatively new headteacher. He has a clear idea of how the school needs to improve and how this can be achieved. Crucially, the new system for tracking pupil achievement is enabling him to check the impact of improvement measures and the progress of pupils towards meeting their challenging targets. A system of school self-evaluation, particularly the monitoring of teaching, is being established. As yet, however, these good procedures are too new to have had a full impact on standards. The leadership role of senior staff and subject leaders (several very recently appointed) is not well developed and so they are not yet fully accountable for progress in their areas of responsibility. The school enjoys strong links with parents and outside agencies and its contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Governors have high ambitions for the school. New initiatives such as regular curriculum meetings with senior staff, together with the new assessment information, are helping them to develop their monitoring role, especially in relation to achievement and standards.

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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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**Overall effectiveness**

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

5 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mercenfeld Primary School, Markfield, Leicestershire LE67 9WG

My colleagues and I really enjoyed our visit to inspect your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. We particularly enjoyed visiting your classrooms, seeing the work you were doing and talking to you about your school. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education and that it is an improving school.

Things we found out about your school

- Overall, you make satisfactory progress in your work, and standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 5 are average.
- You behave very well in school. You enjoy your lessons and get on well with your teachers.
- Teachers are checking your work more frequently and using the information to set work which is at the right level for you.
- The adults in school take good care of you so that you feel safe and enjoy your education.
- The headteacher and adults in school are making changes which are improving the school and helping you to make better progress.

What we have asked your school to do now to improve further

- Use the information they have about your achievements to ensure that you all make the best possible progress, especially in writing.
- Give senior teachers and subject leaders more opportunities to check how well the school is doing in those areas for which they are responsible.
- Encourage the children in the Reception classes to spend more time outdoors and make sure that they learn as much from the activities outside as they do from those inside.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard, behaving well and always doing your best.

We would like to wish you all the best of luck for the future.

Don Mason

Lead inspector