

Inspection of Mercia School

Carter Knowle Road, Sheffield S7 2DY

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Mercia School is a warm and welcoming place. Positive relationships are at the heart of the school's approach to education. Pupils are polite and understand the importance of respect. They recognise how the structures that leaders have put in place help them to stay safe and learn. Pupils feel happy and safe in school. Bullying is extremely rare at Mercia School. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Parents and pupils are proud to be part of the school community.

Leaders have an ambitious vision for the school and are determined that all pupils will achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who receive expert support to make strong progress through the curriculum. All pupils study an ambitious curriculum. This helps them to build the knowledge and cultural capital they need to be ready for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' wider development is exceptional. They access a wide range of enrichment activities that help them to develop their talents and interests. These include sports, cooking, orchestra and chess. Pupils develop strong relationships across the different year groups through 'family dining' and use this time to discuss and debate topics that they study as part of the mastery curriculum. They develop their public speaking by giving thanks to staff and peers through 'appreciation' time.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that goes well beyond what is expected in the national curriculum. Subject leaders have carefully sequenced every topic. Plans set out the important knowledge and skills that pupils must know and remember. Teachers have strong knowledge of the subjects they teach. Lessons are planned well, ensuring that the learning needs of all pupils, including those with SEND, are incorporated. As a result, pupils build a deep body of knowledge across the subjects they study. The quality of education that pupils receive is exceptional.

Leaders have identified their most effective strategies to teach the content of the curriculum. The school's approach to teaching ensures that pupils learn and remember what they have been taught. Leaders recognise that reading and literacy are key to high achievement. Pupils read a range of highly interesting texts in all subjects. They discuss and express their ideas articulately and produce high-quality written work. Teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding in lessons. They adapt their teaching exceptionally well if they find gaps in pupils' knowledge. Important knowledge is revisited in lessons and self-study sessions until it is secure.

Teachers use consistent approaches to rewarding pupils' positive behaviour and attitudes. Pupils know the importance of positive behaviour. They appreciate that teachers and leaders have extremely high expectations of them. Pupils meet these

expectations. Suspensions are very rare. Lessons are hardly ever interrupted by low-level disruption. Pupils' behaviour at social times is also strong. Pupils across the school conduct themselves with maturity. Leaders have cultivated a positive climate that permeates all aspects of school life. Staff engage pupils in conversation and role model positive interactions. There is clear evidence of respect and consideration between staff and pupils. Leaders have clear systems to monitor and support pupils' regular attendance. Pupils' attendance is high.

Leaders' commitment to the wider development of pupils is exceptional. The mastery curriculum is given the same importance as other academic subjects. The content of the curriculum is carefully considered and skilfully sequenced. Teachers deliver the curriculum expertly. Pupils have the opportunity to feed back to leaders about the content of the curriculum. For example, some Year 11 pupils wanted to spend more time learning about gender discrimination, so leaders worked with pupils to amend the content of the curriculum to address this important theme. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and understand the importance of tolerance and respect. They demonstrate these values through their interactions in school.

Leaders have established an enrichment programme that pupils value and approach with enthusiasm. This includes opportunities both in and out of school time, such as representing the school at sporting and academic events. All pupils, including those with SEND, participate in a diverse range of activities and experiences throughout their time at Mercia School. This supports them to develop their talents and interests.

The leadership and management of the school is outstanding. Leaders' ambitious vision for the school has been realised. The headteacher and senior leaders have created an exceptional learning environment, where staff and pupils can flourish. Staff morale is high. They are proud to work at the school. Leaders have prioritised professional development to ensure that staff are expertly trained to perform their roles. Those responsible for governance are knowledgeable and committed to the school. They have a strong understanding of the quality of education that pupils receive, and provide highly effective challenge and support to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have prioritised safeguarding. They have designed the school day to keep pupils safe. Staff are well trained to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders ensure that they work closely with external agencies to support the most vulnerable pupils. Leaders ensure that they undertake the necessary checks on all staff prior to them working at the school.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe through the mastery curriculum and assemblies. They have a strong understanding of risks both online and offline. Pupils know how to get help and/or report their concerns to a trusted adult.

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	145897
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10255580
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	787
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Phil Smith
Headteacher	Dean Webster
Website	www.merciaschool.com
Date of previous inspection	14 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative providers of education.
- The school is part of the Mercia Learning Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, languages, physical education and history. As part of the deep dives, inspectors visited lessons, reviewed curriculum plans and spoke with curriculum leaders and teachers. They also talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work they have completed.

- In addition, inspectors looked at curriculum plans and discussed assessment in mathematics and languages.
- Inspectors met with the SEND coordinator, reviewed education, health and care plans and support plans for pupils with SEND, and visited lessons to see how pupils with SEND are supported to learn.
- Inspectors met with the leader responsible for reading to discuss how reading is promoted in the school. They also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leads and reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding records and policies.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through Ofsted surveys, as well as additional communication from parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's records of bullying, reviewed the actions leaders take when bullying occurs and spoke to several groups of pupils, including some single-gender groups, to understand their experience of school.
- Inspectors met leaders to discuss pupils' behaviour and reviewed the school's data on suspensions and internal suspensions.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the multi-academy trust and the local governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to attendance and the number of pupils' who have joined or left the school roll.

Inspection team

Stuart Voyce, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Richard Wood	Ofsted Inspector
Gordon Watts	Ofsted Inspector
Alex Thorp	His Majesty's Inspector

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