

Flax Hill Junior Academy

Address: Chestnut Avenue, B79 8QZ

Unique reference number (URN): 140523

Inspection report: 6 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	●
Urgent improvement	

✔ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils' personal development is integral to the school's vision and practice. In this nurturing environment, pupils develop independence and resilience. Pupils are courteous, welcoming and proud to represent their school at different events.

The personal development curriculum is enriched by assemblies and experiences that promote a strong sense of community. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures and speak about them with respect. They understand the difference between right and wrong and engage thoughtfully with issues that affect their lives and local community.

Pupils know how to stay safe online and offline. They gain a strong understanding of healthy relationships. Pupils feel listened to and supported by the adults in school.

Pastoral support for pupils is effective. Leaders act quickly to identify pupils who need extra help. They work closely with families and external agencies to support those experiencing traumatic events, such as bereavement and loss. Staff know pupils well and are quick to notice any changes in behaviour. They ensure that pupils receive timely emotional support and can speak with a trusted adult.

Pupils enjoy responsibilities, such as school councillor, music ambassador and librarian. These roles help them to develop their confidence. A wide range of clubs and educational visits enrich pupils' experiences. Pupils take part in creative and cultural opportunities, including art projects and musical events, which broaden their horizons. Experiences such as these help pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, develop character in readiness for life beyond school.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Over time, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are known to social care, make successful progress through the curriculum. Most pupils develop the knowledge and skills needed for the next stage of their education. They read confidently and with expression. When writing, pupils typically write accurately and use vocabulary to good effect. As they get older, they become increasingly confident with using their knowledge of number to solve mathematical problems.

The proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics is similar to what is typical nationally. Disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with their peers nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard in

reading and mathematics and greater depth in writing is the same as the national average. Year 4 pupils attain well in the multiplication check.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils attend school regularly and in line with what is typical nationally. Leaders use robust systems to identify concerns at an early stage. They work effectively with external agencies and families to encourage pupils to attend regularly. The school's relentless approach is having a particularly positive impact on disadvantaged pupils, whose attendance is improving quickly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities attend school regularly.

Leaders have established clear routines that create a calm and friendly environment. Pupils walk around school sensibly and greet each other with a smile. Staff use the agreed approaches to managing pupils' behaviour consistently. Pupils understand and follow the school rules of being 'ready, respectful, safe'. Relationships between pupils and staff are courteous. The start of the day is calm. In lessons, pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They listen carefully and work well with their peers. Leaders oversee pupils' behaviour closely and act swiftly when issues arise, including when online. Pupils who sometimes struggle with their behaviour are empowered to take time out and use practical strategies that help them settle.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have created an inclusive culture where all pupils feel welcome and valued. They are ambitious for every child and review provision regularly to help pupils secure even better outcomes.

Leaders and staff understand the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who are disadvantaged and those known to children's social care. The school works closely with parents and carers, a range of professionals and alternative provisions to ensure any barriers to pupils' learning and development are identified and acted on quickly. Leaders check the quality of extra support in place regularly. Through these checks, they make sure that this support makes a measurable difference to pupils' outcomes and wellbeing.

Pupils with SEND benefit from personalised learning plans that make clear the adaptations they need to complete their work successfully. Training is helping teachers and additional adults to get better at using a range of resources to help pupils with their learning. Adults are particularly effective at adapting teaching for the youngest pupils with complex learning needs. These pupils benefit from a curriculum suitable for their needs and supportive technology. This helps them to make marked progress through the curriculum from their starting points.

Pupil premium funding is used effectively to make sure that disadvantaged pupils take advantage of opportunities and support that enhance their learning and personal development.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and what they need to develop further. They make decisions in the best interests of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many of the leaders' actions have a positive impact. For example, the introduction of a learning hub helps pupils with complex needs to follow a curriculum that is well matched to their needs. The school's work to promote pupils' personal development means that pupils are well cared for and become well-rounded individuals.

Most parents and carers are positive about the school. They appreciate the work of the individual adults who work directly with their children and the opportunities they have to visit the school and celebrate their children's achievements.

Leaders check the work of the school through visits to lessons, discussions with pupils and staff and reviews of pupils' work, for example. However, their evaluations following these checks do not always identify the most pressing priorities for improvement. Furthermore, their feedback to staff is sometimes not precise enough. Consequently, teachers are not always clear about what they should do to maximise pupils' learning quickly.

Governors and trust directors fulfil their statutory duties well. They check safeguarding rigorously and ensure vulnerable pupils receive appropriate support and care. Through visits and meetings, they provide suitable support and challenge that shape the school's strategic direction.

Staff benefit from the professional learning on offer. They value leaders' efforts to manage workload and wellbeing, such as changes made to the expectations for feedback on pupils' work and support during personal challenges.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders recognise that there are inconsistencies in the quality of the curriculum and the teaching of it. While most pupils secure the basics in spelling, handwriting and mathematics, some struggle. The strategies in place to help these pupils are in their infancy and are yet to have an impact. Despite this, reading is a strength. Pupils who need extra help with reading receive the support they need to catch up quickly.

Through ongoing training, leaders help teachers to develop their expertise. Consequently, teachers generally demonstrate secure subject knowledge and provide clear explanations. Teachers make suitable adaptations to teaching to help pupils learn the curriculum.

However, on occasions, sufficient account is not taken of the starting points of the most able and those with special education needs and/or disabilities. This slows their progress through the curriculum because sometimes work is too easy or too difficult.

Leaders have constructed a broad and balanced curriculum that identifies what pupils need to learn from one year to the next. This helps pupils to expand their knowledge over time and prepares them well for their secondary education. There is a focus on building pupils' vocabulary across different subjects. Pupils therefore express their ideas with clarity, both orally and in their writing.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are happy at Flax Hill. They feel valued and fully included in daily school life. Pupils are eager to learn and show sustained, positive attitudes in lessons. They benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that builds their knowledge and subject-specific vocabulary over time.

Leaders and staff know pupils well and act early to remove any barriers, including for disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to children's social care. As a result, most pupils leave well prepared for secondary education. However, on occasions, learning activities are not well matched to pupils' starting points, and a small number of pupils have not yet secured firm foundations in writing and mathematics. This hampers the progress that some pupils make across the curriculum.

Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and respectful, fostering a calm and purposeful environment. Pupils behave well and understand the school's expectations. They feel safe and know who to speak to if they have concerns. Bullying is rare, and when it occurs, staff respond quickly and effectively. Pupils' attendance is in line with what is typical nationally. Leaders tailor their support for families to help pupils attend regularly.

Pupils are tolerant and respectful of others' beliefs and backgrounds. Assemblies, participation in community events and the curriculum help pupils to understand what it means to be a positive citizen in modern Britain.

A rich offer of clubs, such as chess, craft, archery and gardening, nurtures pupils' talents and broadens their interests. Music has a strong profile. Pupils of all ages learn instruments, including the ukulele. They also enjoy performing in school and in the local area as part of the choir. Pupils' successes are celebrated. For instance, those who read one million words earn badges and go on to promote a love of reading with their peers.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment precisely to plan learning that builds on pupils' starting points so that all pupils make sustained progress through the curriculum.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils who struggle with foundational skills in spelling, handwriting and basic mathematics are helped to catch up quickly.
 - Leaders should sharpen their evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's work so that they identify priorities that are specific and actionable to achieve more rapid improvement in the curriculum and the teaching of it.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Mercia Primary Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mr Richard Lane, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Mr Garry Hirons.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body. She also met with 2 directors and one member from Mercia Primary Academy Trust.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of one alternative provision, which is unregistered.

Headteacher: Mr Richard Lane

Lead inspector:

Usha Devi, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Gill Turner, Ofsted Inspector

Janet Tibbits, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

School and pupil context

Total pupils

301

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

300

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

32.89%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.66%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.95%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	61%	Close to average
2024/25	66%	62%	Close to average
2023/24	52%	61%	Below
2022/23	65%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	79%	74%	Close to average
2024/25	84%	75%	Above
2023/24	72%	74%	Close to average
2022/23	80%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	72%	Close to average
2024/25	77%	72%	Close to average
2023/24	67%	72%	Close to average
2022/23	69%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	78%	73%	Close to average
2024/25	81%	74%	Close to average
2023/24	73%	73%	Close to average
2022/23	80%	73%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	51%	46%	Close to average
2024/25	45%	47%	Close to average
2023/24	50%	46%	Close to average
2022/23	60%	44%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	62%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	73%	63%	Close to average
2023/24	56%	62%	Close to average
2022/23	90%	60%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	59%	Close to average
2024/25	67%	59%	Close to average
2023/24	50%	58%	Close to average
2022/23	60%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	70%	60%	Above
2024/25	70%	61%	Close to average
2023/24	56%	59%	Close to average
2022/23	80%	59%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference

between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	51%	68%	-17 pp
2024/25	45%	69%	-24 pp
2023/24	50%	67%	-17 pp
2022/23	60%	66%	-6 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	74%	80%	-6 pp
2024/25	73%	81%	-8 pp
2023/24	56%	80%	-23 pp
2022/23	90%	78%	12 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	61%	78%	-17 pp
2024/25	67%	78%	-12 pp
2023/24	50%	78%	-28 pp
2022/23	60%	77%	-17 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	70%	80%	-10 pp
2024/25	70%	81%	-11 pp
2023/24	56%	79%	-23 pp
2022/23	80%	79%	1 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 terms)	4.6%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24	5.3%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23	5.2%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 terms)	12.8%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24	12.2%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23	14.2%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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