

# Mepal and Witcham Church of England Primary School

Brangehill Lane, Mepal, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 2AL

## Inspection dates

11–12 October 2017

### Overall effectiveness

Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
--	--------------------------

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

- The headteacher and governors are ambitious for the success of their pupils and this is clearly shared with pupils, parents and staff.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils receive a broad and rich curriculum that meets pupils' academic, social and emotional needs. Pupils are empathetic and respectful of the needs of other pupils.
- Governors have developed a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. They are able to challenge and commend the school's work.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the support the school provides for their children. They value the care that staff provide.
- Pupils' achievements across the curriculum are good and improving. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- The leadership's unstinting focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently good. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and make good progress.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. Pupils read exciting and engaging texts. As a result, pupils gain a strong understanding of the meanings conveyed in texts.
- Teaching and learning in Reception are highly effective. Leaders and staff have structured both the indoor and outdoor areas with skill and expert understanding of the needs of the children. As a consequence, children are highly engaged and attentive.
- The school ensures that all pupils are safe. Pupils are aware of internet safety and know how to keep themselves safe. The curriculum helps pupils to develop robust strategies to ensure their physical safety and emotional well-being.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress across the curriculum. Pupil premium funding is used effectively.
- Pupils do not write extensively in areas of the curriculum other than English. Consequently, they do not develop writing skills for a wide range of purposes.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, do not make rapid progress across the curriculum.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and assessment for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, by:
  - ensuring increased challenge in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics
  - ensuring that teachers are accurate and confident in their assessment of what the most able pupils can do and achieve.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and assessment of writing by:
  - ensuring that pupils have greater opportunities to write more extensively in areas of the curriculum other than English.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders, governors and parents work closely to ensure that pupils receive a good, well-rounded education. Parents value highly the care and support that the school provides for their children.
- Mepal and Witcham Church of England School is an inclusive school. Leaders and staff have ensured that pupils, regardless of their different starting points, are able to study and play together in a harmonious environment.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment frequently and effectively. Leaders provide highly effective support linked to whole-school priorities to embed rapid improvements across the curriculum. As this is a small school, leaders also look to external support, which is highly effective in accelerating improvements in standards. For example, leaders and staff work closely with the Cambridge mathematics hub to draw on expertise in mathematics. As a result, pupils' engagement and progress in mathematics have improved. Additionally, leaders and staff work closely and effectively with the Witchford Schools' Partnership, the local authority subject forums and the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust to ensure that assessments are accurate and to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- English and mathematics leaders regularly monitor and track the progress of pupils. Regular pupil progress meetings and frequent reviews by the trust help leaders to identify gaps in pupils' understanding and to schedule appropriate staff training and support for pupils. For example, the English leader identified that pupils had difficulty articulating ideas about the books they had read. As a consequence, she introduced a range of highly engaging texts, led training and provided additional support to staff to ensure that pupils understood the texts they were reading. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment in reading have improved.
- Leadership of personal, social, health and economic education is robust. Pupils develop high levels of empathy and understanding for the needs of others. For example, pupils in a Year 1 class reflected on the importance of being thankful for what they have received in life.
- Pupils and staff gain from the effective use of the additional funding for primary school sports. Pupils engage in a range of additional sports activities to develop their key skills. Pupils are highly aware of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. In addition, leaders have identified the importance of specialist sports teachers and have embedded a highly effective programme within the whole-school curriculum. For example, the inspector observed pupils making progress in honing their hand-to-eye coordination with balls in a pre-school club.
- The curriculum is broad and enriching. Pupils study a range of subjects such as Italian, French, design and technology and computing. Pupils have many opportunities to practise their reading and mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils in a Year 6 class worked on creating their own battery-operated vehicle through applying their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils also have a range of opportunities to further their understanding of curriculum

subjects, such as writing letters in Italian to pupils at their Italian partner school.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is strong. Daily assemblies provide pupils with opportunities to reflect on key values such as thankfulness and kindness. Pupils also study other religions such as Islam and are able to articulate their thoughts and ideas clearly.
- Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is robust. Pupils understand the importance of free speech and tolerance. Pupils are kind and tolerant of other pupils who may have experienced difficulty in their lives. Leaders have created peer mentors to support pupils who may be experiencing difficulties with their friends. The peer mentors received training through the Witchford Schools Partnership and are able to apply highly skilled approaches to resolving conflict. Consequently, the school has a harmonious learning environment full of tolerance and mutual respect.
- School leaders accurately evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development. They are acutely aware of the importance of raising standards for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. Additional pupil premium funding is spent effectively and, although the numbers are small, disadvantaged pupils make good progress. To ensure that pupils receive a broad cultural experience, leaders have introduced highly effective music provision, such as pupils' work with the Grand Union Orchestra. A range of authors also visit the school to work with pupils on their writing.
- Leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective in identifying and addressing the specific barriers to learning that they experience. The funding is used effectively and its use is evaluated well. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to ensure that pupils are able to access the curriculum. Leaders understand the needs of their pupils very well. As a consequence, they are able to provide a highly tailored programme of support. Additional support, both commissioned and provided by the trust, has had an impact on improving pupils' progress across the curriculum.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are highly committed to improving standards in the school.
- The governing body has a breadth of expertise with which to challenge and support the school. For example, oversight of the school's budget is strong.
- Governors visit the school regularly to gather critical information with which to challenge and commend the school.
- Governors' oversight of the school's safeguarding processes is robust. For example, regular auditing of the single central record is undertaken to ensure that all pupils are safe.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders, governors and staff receive regular training and updates in safeguarding. Staff know clearly how to identify signs of pupils at risk and how to refer concerns.

- Safeguarding leads are alert to the importance of identifying danger and act swiftly and appropriately when required.
- The single central record meets all statutory requirements. It is well kept and frequently updated. Checks on the suitability of staff, governors and volunteers are rigorous.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when online. Pupils know what to do if they have an issue or concern and pupils told the inspector that teachers respond quickly and supportively.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Pupils are very enthusiastic learners. The inspector observed pupils in a range of lessons in which their engagement and enthusiasm for the topics was evident. For example, pupils in a mixed Year 3 and 4 class talked and wrote about the cat character from the text, 'Varjak' with high levels of engagement and understanding.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school. As phonics was identified as an area for development, staff received training to improve the standard of teaching and learning. Drawing on a range of approaches, including engaging texts, staff have improved pupils' achievements in the phonics screening check in Year 1.
- Relationships between leaders, staff and pupils are strong. Leaders' high expectations are shared across the school. As a result, pupils strive to do well in class and behave politely and kindly in the playground.
- Staff provide appropriate guidance to pupils to enable them to make progress. Teaching assistants are well trained and provide effective support to pupils through skilful questioning and resources. For example, through careful guidance in an English class, the inspector observed pupils effectively reviewing and editing their writing.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils enjoy reading and are able to discuss with maturity and insight the themes and characters of the texts they have studied. For example, pupils in a mixed Year 5 and 6 class were able to discuss with maturity and clarity the ideas in the text, 'Skellig'. Pupils told the inspector how much they enjoyed reading.
- Mathematical reasoning was identified by leaders and staff as an area for development across the school. As this is a small school, staff have received training both from external and internal trainers. For example, the Cambridge mathematics hub has been instrumental in shaping the improvements to the teaching of mathematical reasoning in the school. Evidence in Year 6 mathematics books demonstrates that pupils are able to articulate the reasoning that underpins their mathematics.
- Teachers develop cross-curricular skills through the broad and balanced curriculum. For example, the inspector observed pupils extend their English vocabulary while learning new words in Italian to describe parts of an Italian house in a mixed Year 5 and 6 lesson.
- Teachers provide homework tasks that draw on cross-curricular themes. Pupils develop independent learning skills through homework tasks, which prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

- Pupils develop clear editing strategies for their writing. They understand the importance of organising their writing through punctuation, paragraphing and spelling. The inspector observed a mixed Year 5 and 6 English lesson in which pupils reflected with maturity on the choices they had made in their writing.
- The teaching of physical education (PE) is a strength of the school. Specialist staff provide a breadth of lessons that develop pupils' skills well. Pupils respond very well to PE tasks, demonstrating both enthusiasm and attention to the skills required. For example, the inspector observed pupils in the mixed Year 3 and 4 PE lesson developing their hockey ball skills with attentiveness and strong coordination.
- Additional support for disadvantaged pupils is effective in supporting them to access the curriculum. Support is tailored and adapted to match the needs of individual pupils. The effectiveness of this support is monitored and tracked frequently by leaders and staff. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make progress across the curriculum.
- Additional support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is highly effective in promoting their well-being and meeting their emotional and social needs. Leaders review support and adapt approaches accordingly to ensure that pupils' needs are met. Teaching assistants receive high-quality training to ensure that they are able to support pupils well.
- The most able pupils do not make rapid progress across the curriculum. Staff do not use assessment concisely to inform additional challenge in the teaching and learning of subjects such as mathematics, reading and writing.
- Pupils do not write extensively in areas of the curriculum other than English. As a result, although pupils make good progress in writing, they do not make the rapid progress that many pupils are capable of.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils display consistently good behaviour both in the classroom and around the school. They are kind, respectful and empathetic towards the needs of other pupils. Pupils told the inspector that they like the school as it is 'small and like a family' and that it is 'a very friendly place'.
- The teaching of personal, social, health and economic education is a strength of the school. Critical values such as thankfulness are reinforced through assemblies and philosophical questions that pupils respond to. For example, the philosophical question in the mixed Year 3 and 4 class was, 'Should we say thank you when we receive presents?' Pupils responded with thoughtful perspectives.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning. They are eager, responsive and attentive. The inspector observed mixed Year 1 and 2 pupils in a mathematics lesson demonstrating eagerness and high levels of interest.
- Pupils include one another. Pupils with different social and emotional needs are

supported by their peers to enable them to participate fully in the life of the school.

- Pupils stated clearly that the school works hard to keep them safe. They know whom to go to if they have a problem. Pupils stated that bullying is not an issue but, if it were, they are confident that staff would deal with it swiftly and effectively.
- The peer mentor system is effective in reinforcing pupils' well-being. Pupils are able to talk to peer mentors to explain their frustrations and are confident that they will help with a resolution.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Parents expressed their satisfaction in the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, with the behaviour of pupils at the school. They were also unanimous in their view that safeguarding is effective at the school.
- Pupils follow school rules well. They move around the school with consideration for others and are courteous.
- Behaviour outside is exemplary. Pupils play well together and share activities and games with genuine enjoyment.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. School strategies such as rewards for class and individual attendance have supported improvements alongside opportunities for sport, led by a specialist teacher, before school begins.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Good

- Pupils have well-developed reading and writing skills at both key stages 1 and 2 and pupils' current progress is good. Pupils at both key stages enjoy reading and they study a range of exciting texts.
- Pupils' books demonstrate pride in their work. Their handwriting and presentation are good. Pupils' progress in writing has improved, and most pupils make good progress. The use of real texts alongside a strong focus on how to structure effective writing has supported this improvement. However, pupils do not enjoy many opportunities to write extensively in other areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not practise writing for a wide range of purposes.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved and most pupils make good progress. Staff identified mathematical reasoning as an area for development, and pupils demonstrate improved understanding of the methods they employ for calculation. Attainment in mathematics was in line with the national figure in 2016 for key stage 1 but below for key stage 2.
- Pupils make very good progress in phonics in Year 1. Having identified gaps in pupils' understanding, leaders reviewed the teaching of phonics and introduced a range of strategies. As a result, the pupils' achievements in the phonics screening check increased to above the national figure in 2017.



- Pupils make good progress in their social and emotional development. They develop critical skills of resilience and hard work to ensure good outcomes both academically and emotionally. For example, they reflect on their writing with their peers. As a result, pupils are more careful about the ways in which they use language to shape what they want to express.
- Pupils develop good scientific skills such as observation and estimation. Evidence in their science books at both key stages demonstrates this. For example, in Year 1, pupils explored the categorisation of materials through hypothesis and evidence.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Currently, they are making good progress due to the tailored approach of their teachers. Progress is monitored and tracked frequently to ensure that pupils are doing as well as they should and that they are fully included in the curriculum.
- The cohort of disadvantaged pupils at the end of both key stages is too small to be statistically significant. However, pupils currently make good progress. This is as a result of a tailored approach in response to the frequent monitoring and tracking of these pupils. For example, the headteacher mentors all of the disadvantaged pupils and organises additional learning opportunities in response to pupils' achievements.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, do not consistently make rapid progress across the curriculum. For example, the most able pupils in mathematics do not consistently extend their understanding. Similarly, pupils do not consistently explore more challenging concepts in reading and writing.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years is well led and managed. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They recognised, for example, that in 2016 only 36% of children reached a good level of development. As a result of a considerable review and adaptation of the provision, the proportion of children making a good level of development increased significantly in 2017. Children enter Reception with skills below what is typical. However, systemic changes to teaching and learning and the curriculum in Reception have ensured that children now make good progress. They are prepared appropriately for the Year 1 curriculum through a concentrated focus on phonics, writing and mathematics.
- Parents are part of the assessment process and are invited to attend the setting first thing in the morning. As a result, good relationships between parents, children and staff have been forged. Home visits and visits to pre-school settings have ensured a fluid transition to Reception for children.
- The outdoor and indoor areas are well structured, with exciting tasks designed to engage children and extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. The inspector observed children, for example, identifying letters and sounds while moving around the outdoor area. Consequently, children make rapid progress in their early phonics skills.
- Recognising the difficulty that many children have with fine and gross motor skills on entering Reception, leaders have introduced specialist PE teaching. Children attend a weekly PE lesson and develop critical skills of balance and flexibility. The inspector



observed children practising skipping with great enthusiasm and skill.

- Children are very well behaved and maintain their attention for long periods on specific activities. They are eager to come to school and enjoy learning.
- The school provides a safe and caring learning environment. Children behave well and enjoy the company of others. They work and play well together, showing that they can take turns and share sensibly. They listen carefully to adults and to each other. Their good behaviour suggests that they feel safe in school.

## School details

Unique reference number	141212
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10036094

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Elizabeth Stazicker
Headteacher	Louise Lomax
Telephone number	01353 778300
Website	<a href="http://www.mepalwitchamschool.com">www.mepalwitchamschool.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@mepalwitcham.cambs.sch.uk">head@mepalwitcham.cambs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is smaller than the average primary school. It converted to an academy with the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust in 2014.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. None of the current pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum

expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector met with the headteacher, the chief executive of the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust, other senior and middle leaders and a group of two governors.
  - The inspector spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site. The inspector also met formally with a group of 14 pupils.
  - The inspector visited a range of classes across Reception, key stage 1 and key stage 2 with the headteacher.
  - The inspector undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books and folders.
  - Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined along with the school's record of checks carried out on staff working at the school.
  - A range of documents were analysed or discussed, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, documents relating to pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour, minutes of governor meetings and curriculum plans.
- The inspector considered the views of 20 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 19 views that parents expressed via free text. The inspector also looked at six staff views expressed via the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

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. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2017