

Mabel Prichard School

Cuddesdon Way, Oxford OX4 6SB

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Led by a strong headteacher, senior leaders and governors have implemented and sustained improvements since the school's previous inspection. New middle leaders are building effective teamwork and sharing their enthusiasm and expertise.
- Staff are deeply committed to ensuring that pupils feel safe, are well cared for and achieve well. Detailed knowledge of pupils' learning and care needs helps teachers to plan relevant learning activities that support pupils well.
- In the early years provision, children settle quickly into the school. Teaching promotes children's interest in learning. Parents and carers are delighted to see how rapidly their children learn to communicate and become more confident.
- By the time that pupils leave the school, they have typically made good progress in both learning and personal development.
- Students leaving the sixth form are well prepared for further education or employment, and to live with at least some independence from adults.
- Pupils enjoy school. They attend regularly and behave well in their lessons and at breaks. They form trusting relationships with adults and are friendly with other pupils.
- Leaders have recently redesigned the curriculum, tailoring it to meet pupils' starting points. The curriculum offers many engaging learning activities that interest pupils, while developing highly personalised and relevant skills.
- Teachers and leaders are currently improving the use of assessment information so that it is consistently reliable. This work is not fully developed or linked with the curriculum in all key stages. It is too soon for leaders yet to have had time to review the impact of the new curriculum and assessment processes on pupils' improving rates of progress.
- Leaders are addressing a few remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. These arise when teachers do not use assessment sharply enough to plan for pupils' next steps in learning. In some primary classes, pupils do not have varied enough opportunities to apply their learning in different ways.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen recent improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use their assessments of pupils' learning consistently well to meet individual needs
 - primary pupils experience a more varied range of opportunities to apply what they have learned so that they deepen their understanding.
- Evaluate sharply the impact of the new curriculum and assessment practice to ensure that, across all areas of learning, pupils in every key stage make the progress of which they are capable.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has been relentless in her drive to improve the school. She is supported ably by her senior leaders. Together, they have formed a detailed understanding of the school. They are ambitious for staff and pupils to achieve success.
- The headteacher has been thorough in her approach to evaluating accurately the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. She recognises that its improvement is an ongoing priority. Leaders have prioritised staff training to support the teaching of number, phonics and communication. A newly developed training programme aims to build expertise in meeting special educational needs for staff who have recently joined the school.
- Newly appointed middle leaders are supporting their colleagues to develop consistently strong practice. There is already an impact from their work in key stages 3 and 4. They are enthusiastic about broadening their influence across the school so that teaching is never less than good.
- Leaders know and understand pupils' needs. This knowledge has added greatly to leaders' expertise when supporting improvements to teaching, learning and assessment, helping them to promote high expectations. Leaders check on pupils' progress each term and they discuss it with teachers. These discussions help teachers to modify provision.
- Leaders and staff have recently designed a new curriculum. They have identified three pathways, based upon pupils' ability to access subject-specific learning. The pathways are planned to empower pupils to acquire clearly identified skills that are relevant to their needs. The school's curriculum is sequenced carefully so that, over time, pupils meet teachers' demanding expectations.
- Leaders and teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by giving them experiences of the wider world. The curriculum gives pupils plenty of opportunities to be included in challenging and inclusive events, including a recent performance at the Royal Albert Hall with a county choir.
- The school works collaboratively with parents. They have regular helpful information about their child and about the school. Summing up the positive home-school relationship, one parent was typical of others when writing: 'I feel that there is a strong partnership between us over matters such as my child's anxiety at school and his problem behaviours. The school really recognises what motivates my child and is very caring.'
- Leaders make effective use of additional funding. They use it diligently for its intended purpose. Encouragingly, during the past year, all disadvantaged pupils made good progress. Children looked after are provided for well and they have every opportunity to achieve as well as they can. Funding for primary sport and physical education is used to help pupils to increase their mobility and play games cooperatively and to promote their good mental health.
- Leaders have recently implemented a number of important changes that are intended

to make a positive contribution to improving provision. They have yet to evaluate precisely the impact of their improvement actions on pupils' progress in all key stages and across the different aspects of learning within the curriculum.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has taken steps to improve its effectiveness since the previous inspection. Most importantly, the governing body has recruited new members who have brought strong and relevant skills. Governors have increased the number of times that they meet, and they have benefited from training to understand their roles and responsibilities. Individual governors make visits to the school to understand its work and to check ongoing developments.
- A linked safeguarding governor has expertly supported all governors to understand their responsibilities for safeguarding. They check that policies and procedures are implemented consistently. Governors question leaders effectively about attendance and behaviour and follow through their enquiries. They have explored how additional funding is used to determine whether it is making a difference to pupils. They are beginning to come to grips with understanding, and challenging, pupils' rates of progress and overall outcomes.
- Governors benefit from having accurate information from the headteacher. They recognise how effectively senior leaders challenge themselves. As a result of the changes that the governing body has made, it is now well placed to probe for detail when holding leaders to account and to contribute to future improvement priorities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher has implemented a team approach to safeguarding, and several members of staff on both school sites are trained to be designated leaders. Leaders ensure that all staff fully understand that pupils' learning difficulties can make them particularly vulnerable. The school's culture of safeguarding helps everyone to be vigilant.
- Leaders ensure that all staff clearly understand the school's policies and procedures. They are trained in line with their levels of responsibility and regularly updated to understand risks.
- Leaders have introduced an online system to gather and maintain information for safeguarding pupils. Designated leaders are quickly alerted to staff's concerns about pupils' safety and welfare, and they follow these up tenaciously. Leaders know pupils and their families very well, which helps to ensure that the right support is quickly in place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and other adults know their pupils well. They challenge pupils in line with their abilities, using their knowledge effectively to personalise approaches. Learning activities are typically well matched to meet needs. Teaching develops pupils' skills in

literacy and numeracy, focusing on practical content that they will use regularly, both in and out of school.

- Throughout the primary years, a broad range of communication strategies support pupils to learn and interact with others. When pupils reach key stage 3, they are able to select and develop their preferred assistive communication strategy to help them learn across a broad curriculum. Pupils told inspectors that they particularly enjoy opportunities to learn out of school, such as by extending their horticultural studies through activities on a farm.
- The most able pupils learn to write sentences independently, often assisted by technology. Many pupils like to read and write with the use of picture symbols. Teaching assistants are highly skilled in using multi-sensory approaches to stimulate pupils with the most complex needs.
- Teachers give the most able pupils helpful feedback about their learning. Pupils are encouraged when teachers tell them exactly what their learning is and what they are going to do next. Pupils' learning routines are supported through the use of visual timetables.
- During the current academic year, leaders have taken steps to ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' learning accurately take into account even their smallest steps in progress. This work is developing strongly but is not fully complete,. Nor is assessment practice fully linked to the curriculum in all key stages. Leaders know that some variability remains. Teaching does not consistently make use of assessment across all areas of learning to identify clearly pupils' next steps.
- Teachers patiently help pupils to apply basic skills in different practical ways so that they commit them to memory. In the secondary classes, pupils typically experience a breadth of learning experiences within each lesson to help them to apply their skills and knowledge in a range of ways. Not all primary pupils have a varied enough range of opportunities to apply their learning and to deepen their understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy being at school and their positive attitudes help them to learn. In the primary department, they learn to contribute to lessons. Secondary pupils enjoy their lessons so much that they do not recognise how hard they are working and learning.
- Caring relationships feature strongly across the school. Pupils listen patiently to each other's ideas and to the adults who work with them. Pupils like each other and they are keenly involved in opportunities that help them to cooperate, for example cooking and performing. They take a pride in their community, for example by working with staff to create a sensory garden that everyone can enjoy.
- Pupils enjoy using technology. Within school, pupils are kept safe when they use computers. Teachers help pupils, in line with their abilities, to learn how to keep themselves safe when they use mobile devices at home. Well-planned lessons help pupils to learn to protect themselves, including in their future relationships.

- The school provides a range of additional support that helps pupils to manage identified anxieties or difficulties. As a result, pupils learn how to express their feelings safely and they successfully adapt their behaviour.
- A large proportion of pupils have medical and/or care needs that require a high level of within-school support. Well-trained teaching assistants understand and meet these needs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attendance is below the national average, although absence is rare unless pupils are unwell. Persistent absence occurs only as a result of being hospitalised or when moving out of area and awaiting a new placement. Transport arrangements help pupils to arrive punctually and they settle quickly at the start of the school day.
- Pupils told inspectors that, in school, 'Everyone is nice.' They all shook their heads when asked whether there is any bullying or unkind behaviour.
- Behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes is managed effectively because staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' needs. Pupils like and respect each other and they make friends without any boundaries of disability, ethnicity or gender.
- Teachers maintain careful records of pupils' behaviour because they understand that it communicates a need. All incidents are carefully followed up. Leaders' analysis of incidents is used to help staff to make changes in provision.
- On occasion, when learning tasks were not precisely matched to need, pupils became disengaged.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their low starting points, pupils make increasingly fast rates of progress as they move through the school. Once they reach the secondary phase, they build upon and apply the basic skills that they learned in the earlier key stages.
- Pupils develop effective communication and literacy skills, which enable the most able pupils to read and write. They make progress in using numbers for practical purposes, such as shopping and measuring.
- The school's focus on personal development means that pupils develop independence to support realistic future aspirations. Pupils' sense of ownership about their futures helps staff to tailor learning to meet their needs and interests.
- Pupils follow a personal development course that encompasses functional skills. Where a pupil has a particular subject talent, such as drama or computing, they join a level 1 or 2 course in a mainstream class. At the end of key stages 4 and 5, pupils achieve accreditation for their learning.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next stage as a result of their studies. They all move on to suitable education, employment or training, even if their disability means that employment is on a part-time basis.

- A small number of pupils with the most complex difficulties learn to respond to multi-sensory stimuli. They patiently learn to communicate through signs and symbols, and sometimes through the use of touch.
- As a result of additional funding, disadvantaged pupils have recently exceeded teachers' expectations to make strong rates of progress in communication and literacy and in everyday mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Children are supported skilfully from the time that they enter the early years provision. They settle quickly and make good progress with their learning and development. The provision makes a strong contribution to developing children's interest in learning.
- Parents say that their children are nurtured well through their early years. They are delighted to see how well their children start to communicate and take an interest in each other once they are at school. Parents receive regular updates about their children's learning and they actively contribute their own observations from home to inform the next steps.
- A high level of individual care ensures that the needs of three-year-old children are understood and met very well. Adults used snack time purposefully as an opportunity to help children to interact and make choices.
- Teaching is carefully planned to take into account the needs of each individual. Other adults motivate children to join in well-planned activities. Adults model learning through play in the outdoor area, helping children to make choices and to communicate by linking objects with words. During the inspection, children enjoyed learning through play, using items related to a teddy bears' picnic.
- Children learn to develop their pre-reading and writing skills, to understand numbers and, above all, to communicate. The most able children take an interest in books. Where it is appropriate to their needs, individual children in Reception join some sessions in the adjoining mainstream school.
- Leadership and management are good. The leader ensures that her team understands the curriculum and that it maintains a strong focus on important areas of learning.
- The early years team understands and follows the school's comprehensive safeguarding arrangements. They are appropriately trained to understand the particular welfare needs of very young children.
- Children make good progress from very low starting points on entry to the early years. Although children do not reach the early learning goals at the end of their Reception Year, they have positive attitudes to help them to transfer into Year 1.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders' recent work has strengthened provision by increasing students' breadth of

opportunities, both in and out of school. The new leader is inspiring current students to achieve their very best and to have aspirations for their future. They respond enthusiastically to their lessons and want to do well. Students enjoy supported workplace visits and visits to colleges, all of which help them to think about what they will do when they leave the school.

- Students interact well with each other and with other pupils. They set a positive example by behaving cooperatively, particularly through their work with the school council, where they often take a lead to organise fundraising events.
- Students sustain the earlier progress that they have made with their basic skills. They deepen their learning across a carefully designed curriculum that supports their transition into adulthood. Students are justly proud of their work files that show the progress they have made. The files provide evidence towards accreditation that students achieve at different levels before they leave school.
- The curriculum offers a range of real-life opportunities that are purposeful. Staff maintain a close eye on students' interests, and they skilfully guide students into further education or employment. They support students to consider suitable future choices in collaboration with parents. The school provides individual access to careers advice and guidance from outside the school, based upon students' needs and abilities.
- Regular meetings with parents and social care professionals enable detailed future planning for students with the most complex needs. The aim of school leaders is that these students will access fulfilling work alongside their supported living arrangements.
- Of equal importance to students is the way in which they learn to keep themselves safe and healthy as they prepare to leave school. Leaders are deeply aware of the safeguarding needs of vulnerable young adults and they plan carefully so that needs are met.
- The sixth-form environment includes a flat which acts as students' daytime 'home'. Activities take place that help them learn how to be independent of adults and support each other. Students learn how to make decisions. They plan meals, shop for food, cook and clear away. Staff help them to learn how to keep themselves safe in their future relationships.
- Senior leaders make thorough checks to ensure that students meet the expectations identified in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Leaders need more time to evaluate precisely the impact of their newly extended provision on students' learning and progress.

School details

Unique reference number	123339
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10054393

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	14
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Damian Haywood
Headteacher	Lucy Wawrzyniak
Telephone number	01865 777 878
Website	www.mabelprichard.org
Email address	enquiries@mabelprichard.org
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2018

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and pupils with autism spectrum disorder. A large number of pupils have communication difficulties, and some are nonverbal. A small number of pupils have degenerative or life-limiting medical conditions.
- All pupils are placed in the school by the local authority as a result of an EHC plan.
- There are twice as many boys as girls. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.

- Approximately half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Almost one third of pupils come from families where English is spoken as an additional language.
- The school is located on two sites: one is for primary pupils and one is for secondary pupils and the sixth form. Both sites adjoin a mainstream academy.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The early years provision includes a small number of children of nursery age. At the time of the inspection, none were less than three years of age.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in each of the school’s 11 classrooms on at least one occasion. They carried out a number of short visits to classrooms for specific purposes, such as to review the provision for disadvantaged pupils. A senior leader accompanied inspectors during all observations. An inspector also observed pupils during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers and middle leaders. The lead inspector met three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with secondary pupils to gather their views about the school. They looked at pupils’ work, learning plans and records of progress.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of school documents, including information relating to safeguarding, attendance, funding for disadvantaged pupils, school improvement evaluation and planning, and minutes of governors’ meetings. They reviewed samples of pupils’ case studies, annual review reports and leaders’ monitoring reports.
- Inspectors discussed and considered individual pupils’ progress and attainment with leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors met parents at the beginning and end of the school day. They considered 19 responses to Ofsted’s online parents’ questionnaire, Parent View, and 12 accompanying free-text responses. Nineteen responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

Linda Jacobs, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ross Macdonald

Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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