

Inspection of a good school: Mill Lane Community Primary School

Mill Lane, Chinnor, Oxfordshire OX39 4RF

Inspection dates:

15–16 January 2020

Outcome

Mill Lane Community Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel valued. Their opinions are encouraged and listened to. People are kind, good-humoured and friendly. Everyone feels included. Pupils behave well. They do not worry about bullying and trust staff to resolve any worries. In lessons pupils are keen, relaxed, focused and engaged. Around the school they behave with consideration and maturity. Pupils relish opportunities to be involved by being part of the school council, supporting the office staff or helping at lunchtime. They take these roles very seriously, making sure that they arrive on time and discharge their responsibilities diligently.

Leaders have made sure that the whole school community has contributed to the school's vision. Everyone understands what the school is about. They have encouraged staff to think very carefully about what and how pupils learn. There is a sense of excitement about the resulting changes, which are fully under way. Expectations are high.

Parents and staff trust in leaders. All parents who completed the Ofsted survey, Parent View, would recommend the school. They value highly the wide range of opportunities provided for their children. Parents are rightly confident that the school prepares their children well for the next stages of their education and beyond.

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

Teachers capitalise on pupils' good behaviour and independence. They set challenging tasks which pupils enjoy tackling, in groups or individually. Teachers plan work that is carefully matched to the national curriculum. In some subjects, notably mathematics, they link learning well so that it builds in clear sequences. This helps pupils to apply and deepen their learning over time so that they attain well. For example, Year 2 pupils investigating building shapes used spaghetti and marshmallows to build cubes and prisms. Then, they were expertly encouraged to explain their secure knowledge of vertices and angles and apply this to other shapes.

In other subjects, such as history, sequences of learning are sometimes less well developed. This means that pupils do not develop the same depth of understanding. As a result, some have a limited sense of how periods of time connect and find it harder to build on their knowledge. New planning is helping pupils to make links. For example, pupils in Year 4 studying hierarchies in Ancient Egypt thoughtfully compared this to modern society.

Parents are rightly confident that their children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs met well. Right from the start in early years, staff expertly identify and support these needs. The SEN team work closely with staff and, where appropriate, outside agencies to ensure that support is well targeted and regularly reviewed. Staff across the school know pupils' individual needs well. As a result, pupils with SEND thrive.

Leaders ensure that developing strong reading skills remains a priority, despite pupils' consistently strong outcomes in both reading and phonics over time. Pupils get off to a great start in early years because phonics is taught consistently and effectively by well-trained staff. Children enjoy rhymes and stories in the nursery. Very quickly children in Reception Year children gain the skills and confidence to begin to read sentences. Staff ensure that reading books are carefully matched to their burgeoning skill and confidence. As pupils move up through the school they benefit from regular discussions about books. By the time they reach the top of the school most pupils can read very well and discuss the characters and plots of books they share. Those pupils who struggle with their reading, including those with SEND, are helped to catch up quickly so that they too read confidently and well.

Community is of central importance. Pupils benefit from a wide range of local visits and visitors. The school is immersed in its local community, but leaders also ensure that pupils are outward-looking. A wide range of languages and cultures are celebrated. Mutual respect is central to the school's ethos. Pupils learn the importance of recycling, for example, through ensuring that old classroom chairs are donated to an overseas charity.

Children get off to a secure start in early years. They enjoy well-planned activities such as the 'tinkering table', where they investigate machinery or playing together learning hockey or role play. Knowledgeable staff build expertly on what children can do during activities so that they are well prepared for Year 1.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Parents, staff and pupils are confident that pupils are safe at school. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and know what to look out for to help keep pupils safe. Clear systems are in place to report any concerns, which are responded to swiftly and appropriately.

Importantly, leaders have ensured that pupils feel confident to express any worries. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. Leaders have worked with insight and commitment to provide information and training across the school community. This helps provide families with the tools they need to help keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum offers a wide range of subjects for pupils to learn. However, pupils' learning in the foundation subjects is not consistently well sequenced. Leaders need to continue to oversee this process and to check that planning and teaching successfully build pupils' learning so that pupils know more over time.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Mill Lane Community Primary School to be good on 13–14 September 2011.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	123036
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10122259
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Chris Foote
Headteacher	Tineke Van Der Ploeg
Website	www.mill-lane.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 June 2016

Information about this school

- The school has one class in each year group.
- The governing body manage breakfast and after-school childcare at the school.
- The school includes a nursery, Windmill nursery, which is run by the school and caters for children from three years of age.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- Few pupils are disadvantaged. The proportion of pupils who have free school meals is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- I met with senior leaders and the governing body including the chair. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- I did deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. This involved meeting leaders who are responsible for these subjects and visiting lessons to observe learning. Meetings were held with pupils to talk about their learning and to look at their books and with teachers to discuss pupils' understanding and look at plans.

- I gathered a range of evidence regarding safeguarding, including from discussions with pupils and staff, and safeguarding records.
- In addition to talking to parents at the school gate, 118 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 109 free-text responses, were considered. I also took account of the views of 20 staff, 70 responses to the pupil survey and a letter from a parent.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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