

Inspection of a good school: Maplewell Hall School

Maplewell Road, Woodhouse Eaves, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE12 8QY

Inspection dates: 10–11 March 2020

Outcome

Maplewell Hall School continues to be a good school.

There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely well cared for in this welcoming school. Staff meet their needs very well. Leaders' vision for pupils to aspire to succeed through nurture and an engaging curriculum is at the heart of the school's work. Extensive opportunities exist for pupils to explore their talents and interests. Pupils receive a high-quality education. Their learning is precisely planned. Pupils make excellent progress along their individual curriculum pathways. These prepare them well for adulthood, further education and employment.

Staff provide high-quality support to pupils. They have secured strong, trusting relationships with pupils. Many pupils told us that staff keep them safe and want them to do well and be happy.

The atmosphere in school is calm and purposeful. Pupils say they can talk to adults if they feel worried. There are many places pupils can go to talk, feel safe, relax and take time out. Staff help pupils to manage their behaviour, which improves during their time at the school. As a result, there are few incidents of bullying. Pupils' behaviour is excellent.

Leaders provide wide-ranging extra-curricular activities for pupils. Pupils enjoy additional academic, social, leisure and work experiences. They leave the school very well prepared for their next steps.

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

Teachers prioritise reading. There is a structured approach to teaching phonics. Pupils who struggle to read, catch up quickly. Pupils read often. Pupils listen to adults read stories and they enjoy discussing texts. Teachers make sure pupils understand and can explain the vocabulary they read. Pupils become fluent, confident readers and increasingly competent communicators.

Curriculum plans are coherent and progressive. Teachers use assessments to pinpoint pupils' starting points. They use information from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans to meet pupils' needs well. They identify what pupils need to learn and when. Teachers ensure that pupils understand and remember what they are learning. They do this by revisiting key vocabulary and concepts during every lesson. Teachers prompt pupils to think back to their prior learning. They then use their knowledge in their current lessons. In English, pupils recall important information in media texts. They discuss the reliability of information and the danger of believing 'fake news'. In science, we heard pupils singing a song about photosynthesis. They used this to help them remember how plants produce and use glucose.

Teachers ensure pupils have an in-depth mastery of the subjects they teach. The promotion of pupils' personal, social, health, economic and emotional education is strong. In 'preparation for adulthood' sessions, pupils learn about diversity. They can explain how people have different beliefs and characteristics. They discuss the importance of empathy and tolerance in relationships. Pupils are further prepared for life in the wider world through the school's curriculum and culture. For example, pupils go to the theatre, visit the science museum and seaside. Teachers place high priority on developing pupils' independence to live fulfilled lives. They seize every chance they can to support pupils to grow in confidence and achieve. Most pupils gain good qualifications. All students progress to further education or employment.

Pupils who attend the school have a range of diverse needs. Some have complex needs. Leaders train staff to support pupils with their medical and mental health needs. The school offers specialist support for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. The 'Maplewell Autism Provision' provides bespoke education and nurture in a calm environment.

Overall, attendance is good, yet the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is too high.

Post-16 students study subjects that will help them achieve their career aspirations. They learn about the challenges and opportunities of adulthood. They take part in relevant work experience. Most complete the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, some to gold standard. Students get help with managing finances and learn essential skills to gain employment. All post-16 students leave school to enter employment or attend specialist colleges. A new building for post-16 students is due to open shortly at a new site in Loughborough. This is causing some anxiety for students. The new site is planned to provide better facilities and increased opportunities.

There are a rich variety of extra-curricular activities for pupils to enjoy. Pupils gain confidence from personal tuition and by broadening their life experiences. Most parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. Many say their child's attitude to education has changed since coming to the school. A typical comment was: 'Whatever expectation you have of a special school, Maplewell goes above and beyond because of its tremendous drive for high achievement and inclusion.'

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that actions to improve the persistent absence of pupils and support for pupils with high anxiety in the post-16 provision, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders' procedures to safeguard pupils are efficient and timely. There is a culture of diligence throughout the school. Staff know their safeguarding responsibilities. They keep up to date with the latest information through regular training on how to keep pupils safe. They understand the vulnerabilities of the pupils. Teachers prioritise teaching pupils how to stay safe. This includes when they are using social media, and from substance abuse.

Safeguarding leaders keep comprehensive records of safeguarding concerns. They work well with the school's pastoral team, parents and agencies. Leaders are tenacious in their efforts to provide pupils with the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders monitor the attendance of pupils scrupulously. They work with agencies and families to help pupils to attend school regularly. However, too many pupils are persistently absent from school. Leaders should ensure that the actions they take to reduce persistent absence are rigorous and effective.
- Provision for post-16 students will shortly relocate to a new site. Leaders are aware that this is an anxious time for students and their families. They have comprehensive plans to help students' transition to the new site. However, some students and their parents are worried about the quality of support students will receive after relocating. Leaders should ensure that staff working in the new post-16 provision have sufficient knowledge and expertise to meet students' needs well.

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 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 19–20 November 2014.

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	120348
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10048111
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Ivens
Headteacher	Mr Jason Brooks
Website	www.maplewell.leics.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Most have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. An increasing number of pupils have a range of social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All have an education, health and care plan.
- The school works closely with the Forest Way Teaching School Alliance.
- The school no longer provides residential care for pupils.
- The school provides lunchtime and after-school activities on the school site.
- The school currently uses one alternative provider: R.E.A.L. Alternative Provision School.
- A new post-16 provision has been built on a new site in Loughborough. This is due to open in April 2020. Current post-16 students will transfer to the new site.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and a school improvement adviser for the Forest Way Teaching School Alliance. We also met with three members of the governing body, including the chair.
- We did deep dives in: English, mathematics and science. We met with the leaders of these subjects and visited classes from different year groups. We spoke with teachers about the lessons they deliver. We met with pupils and spoke with them about their work. We looked at pupils' work in these subjects. We also examined the quality of pupils' learning in art and preparation for adulthood.
- We spoke with some parents informally at the start of the school day. We also took account of the 20 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 52 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff. We spoke with school staff. We also spoke with pupils about their school and took account of the 42 responses to Ofsted's survey for them.
- We looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation of current performance and plans for improvement; overviews of the school's curriculum planning; the school's most recent published information on the achievement and progress of pupils; information relating to safeguarding; information about behaviour management; information relating to the school's use of the pupil premium funding and scrutinised pupils EHC plans; the school's most recent information relating to the attendance of pupils and minutes from meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Ferguson

Ofsted Inspector

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