

Inspection of Marden Vale CofE Academy

William Street, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 9BD

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 June 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not receive a good-quality education, although leaders are taking strong action to bring about necessary improvements. The school has already improved a lot. Everyone prioritises getting pupils to read accurately, write well and be confident in mathematics. Most pupils are catching up well. However, teachers do not demand enough of some pupils. Pupils do not learn and remember all the essential knowledge they should in every subject.

Pupils usually work hard in lessons. Nonetheless, pupils' concentration can stray when the curriculum does not meet their needs well enough, including in the resource base (RB).

Pupils usually follow the school rules. Pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes is much improved. Pupils say that school is a much 'happier place'. Pupils are confident that leaders deal promptly with any poor behaviour. However, they say that when bullying happens, some staff do not resolve this swiftly.

Pupils are safe. Adults care for them. Pupils have a strong understanding of right and wrong. The school's values, such as courage, perseverance and trust, provide a strong moral code. Pupils know to respect and support one another. There is a growing sense of belonging and pride to be part of the 'Marden Vale family'. This can be seen in pupils' regular and improved attendance.

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

Parents recognise that the school needs to improve further. The quality of education, including in the early years and RB, is not good.

Leaders' work to develop the quality of education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) means it is improving steadily. Leaders have ensured that there is a much sharper focus on meeting pupils' communication and language, reading, social, emotional, mental health and medical needs. Many teachers are setting more precise targets for pupils with SEND. Pupils receive extra teaching to help them catch up, and many are. Nevertheless, some staff do not have the specialist subject knowledge they need to meet pupils' academic needs well, including in the RB. When this happens, pupils' attitudes to learning falter and gaps in pupils' knowledge persist.

Leaders are rebuilding the school's curriculum subject by subject. They are not taking short cuts or implementing 'quick fixes' to mask the root causes of any shortcomings. Leaders have improved staff's subject knowledge in teaching English, mathematics and science. In these subjects, curriculum plans are well sequenced. Most pupils are learning increasingly well. Sometimes, however, the curriculum in writing and mathematics is not implemented effectively. This means pupils do not gain the depth of knowledge they should.

Teachers deliver lessons in every national curriculum subject. In geography, history and computing, teachers' plans outline what is to be taught and when. As these new and better plans are being implemented, pupils are learning more and remembering more. However, in other subjects, like French and design and technology, leaders and teachers have not agreed what pupils should learn in each series of lessons. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in these subjects are not high enough. Sequences of work miss important steps in learning. When this happens, pupils do not sustain their concentration sufficiently. This hinders the progress pupils make.

There is a sharp focus on teaching pupils to read from Reception onwards. Teachers make accurate checks on the sounds pupils know. Most pupils are learning to read well and spell accurately. Pupils are gaining much confidence and self-belief as a result. However, a small number of pupils in Year 3 do not read as well as they could.

Leaders set clear expectations for pupils' positive behaviour. Pupils learn routines quickly, including in the early years. The frequency of poor behaviour has reduced noticeably. Staff manage this well. However, sometimes there are still squabbles at lunchtime. Pupils' learning is still disrupted in class occasionally.

Leaders promote pupils' wider experiences well. Theatre companies visit, and local charities, such as Wiltshire Air Ambulance, share their work. Pupils keep up with the national news. A school-wide focus on fostering pupils' mental health is having a positive impact. However, leaders' work to strengthen the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is at an early stage.

The multi-academy trust has appointed skilful leaders. The headteacher and her team have improved the school markedly. It is no longer inadequate. Subject leadership is developing well. Governors meet with a range of leaders to check the impact of their work. Central trust staff ensure that the school is continuously improving. However, the trust knows there is significant work still to do before the school is good.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong and vigilant culture of safeguarding. Staff recruitment checks and training are in line with statutory requirements. Leaders ensure that staff apply their safeguarding training well. They take particular care to identify concerns quickly. Leaders make swift referrals and take action to ensure they are doing all they can to minimise pupils' risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not plan effectively for the needs of pupils with SEND, including in the RB. Some pupils' academic needs are not met sufficiently well. Leaders must ensure that staff have the subject knowledge they need to plan and implement sequences of work that meet these pupils' academic needs.
- The school's curriculum, including in the RB and early years, is not coherently planned in all subjects. Sequences of work can miss important concepts. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders must ensure that curriculum plans in every subject include all the essential knowledge that pupils require to be well prepared for their next stage.
- Some staff do not implement the curriculum in writing and mathematics effectively. This means pupils do not gain the depth of knowledge they need to succeed. Leaders should ensure teachers deliver sequences of work that enable pupils to deepen their knowledge so that they can excel in mathematics and writing.
- Teachers' expectations are not high enough for all pupils in every subject. On occasions, there is low-level disruption in lessons or pupils' learning is disrupted. This hinders pupils' ability to progress through the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct so that pupils show commitment to their learning and study effectively.
- Sometimes, it takes too long for staff to identify when pupils fall out at lunchtimes. This means issues can go unresolved or persist. Leaders need to improve their monitoring of any incidents of fallings out or bullying, so that pupils can be assured that when they have concerns, staff deal with these swiftly.

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 [here](#).

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	141988
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10184686
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Graham Exon
Headteacher	Alison Emmerson
Website	http://www.mardenvale.dsat.org.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust (DSAT). This is a multi-academy trust of 22 schools.
- The school has an additional resource base (RB) for 17 pupils with complex needs. Pupils who attend the resource base have education, health and care plans. There are two classes, rainbow, and sunshine class.
- Since the last full inspection, there have been significant staffing changes. A new headteacher took up post in January 2020. There have been other staffing changes, including the appointment of new English and mathematics leaders, a special educational needs and disabilities leader (SENDCo) and a deputy headteacher. There have also been changes to staffing in the RB. A new substantive leader of the RB has been appointed and takes up the role in September 2021.
- There have been considerable changes to the local governance structure, including a new chair of governors.
- The school has a much larger proportion of disadvantaged pupils than that seen nationally.

- The school does not use an alternative provider.
- The school is working with local English and mathematics Hubs.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, SENDCo and other leaders. Inspectors also met with a pastoral leader, teachers and support staff, including in the RB.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. This entailed discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of work, discussions with teachers, discussions with pupils and listening to pupils read to an adult. Leaders also met with subject leaders of modern foreign languages, computing and science.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe. Inspectors met with designated leaders of safeguarding, reviewed a range of school documentation and talked with staff and pupils. Inspectors also considered the school's safeguarding curriculum and its effectiveness in providing pupils with the information they need to keep safe.
- Inspectors considered a range of other school documentation, such as the school's improvement plan and subject plans. Inspectors reviewed records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance exclusions and bullying.
- The lead inspector met with DSAT trustees. She also held meetings with the chief executive officer, director of education and regional director of education. She met with representatives responsible for local governance, and spoke with a representative of the local authority to discuss SEND.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents through Ofsted's online questionnaire and free-text comments. An inspector talked to parents on day 2 of the inspection. An inspector reviewed the school's internal parental survey. The lead inspector considered staff surveys as part of this inspection.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marcia Northeast

Ofsted Inspector

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