

Inspection of Mary Elliot School

Leamore Lane, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 7NR

Inspection dates: 2 to 3 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Mary Elliot School do not receive a good enough education. The curriculum across the school does not meet the needs of pupils well enough. Pupils are not helped to know and remember more because leaders have not decided what they want pupils to learn, or the order in which they will learn it. Pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The new leadership team is working hard to establish a culture of high expectations. The school's values of positivity, opportunity, kindness, inclusiveness and togetherness are at the heart of everything they try to do. Staff care deeply for their pupils and know them well. They help pupils communicate more easily.

Pupils are happy and behave well in school. Leaders have introduced different behaviour approaches that are used by staff to support the pupils. Pupils know what is expected of them and follow routines well. Staff quickly support pupils if they are worried or feel bullied.

Leaders carefully consider pupils' personal development. Pupils on the school council make decisions about school activities and equipment they would like. Visits to local shops, as well as running an allotment, help prepare pupils for life away from school.

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

The executive headteacher has quickly identified the improvements needed at the school. He has worked closely with governors to increase leadership capacity to address the issues faced by the school. Leaders across the federation want all pupils to achieve the very best they can. They know that there is a lot to do to realise their ambition for the pupils.

Leaders are at the very early stages of developing most subjects in the curriculum. This curriculum has little structure or coherence and does not meet the needs of all pupils. Leaders have not given enough attention to the sequence of the curriculum. They have not identified the skills and knowledge they want pupils to learn. As a result, pupils are not making the progress they could.

Leaders provide regular training for staff to help them develop the subject knowledge they need to teach the curriculum effectively. Staff value this training. However, leaders do not check how well teachers implement the curriculum. As a result, some pupils experience a jumbled set of lessons that do not match the intended curriculum or meet their needs. Teachers do not help pupils well enough to know and remember more.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hindered leaders' plans to improve reading. There is a lack of adequate reading resources for pupils to use in school and at home. Teachers do not read regularly to pupils. Some teachers are unsure how to help pupils

understand the books they read. Pupils are not supported well enough to develop a love of reading.

Leaders want their pupils to learn to read. They have reintroduced a phonics programme, but this is not delivered in a coherent way. Pupils do not receive sufficient support to develop their reading skills.

The sixth-form curriculum is not coherently planned and does not meet the needs of all students. Leaders have not identified the knowledge and skills that students need to be successful when they leave school. Teachers do not help students to transfer their learning successfully to real-life situations. As a result, students are not well prepared for their next stage in education, employment or care.

Pupils receive appropriate careers advice and guidance. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to meet a range of employers. Leaders aim to ensure that all pupils engage in a form of appropriate work experience.

Leaders have given considerable thought to pupils' wider personal development. There is a new leader for the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. A good start to planning this curriculum has been made. Pupils learn about their physical and mental health. Staff help pupils learn how to understand their emotions and when to give consent to something. The leader has begun to plan the wider opportunities to help prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. However, these plans are at an early stage.

Leaders and staff support pupils to develop positive behaviours. When pupils are upset, staff support them using an agreed behaviour plan. Leaders provide regular training to help staff manage behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to develop strategies to manage their behaviour when they can. Leaders monitor all incidents, including any bullying incidents, carefully. They look for trends and patterns in behaviours and make changes to behaviour plans, if needed, without delay.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know pupils and their families exceptionally well. Leaders have thought carefully about the safeguarding of their pupils. They ensure that staff receive training and know about any safeguarding risks. Staff identify any safeguarding concerns quickly. The designated safeguarding leads keep meticulously detailed records. They are tenacious in following up concerns to secure the help their pupils need.

Leaders are rigorous in their recruitment procedures.

At the start of every day, pupils are reminded, with pictures and songs, about how to keep safe. Pupils know whom they can talk to, and they say that they feel safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not constructed a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. As a result, pupils are not benefiting from a good quality of education. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils.
- The curriculum is not coherently sequenced and does not identify the skills and knowledge that leaders want pupils to learn. This means that pupils do not build their learning successfully in order to know and remember more. Leaders should define the knowledge and skills that they want pupils to know over time and in what order as a matter of priority. Also, leaders should check that the intended curriculum is implemented well by teachers.
- Leaders have not prioritised reading sufficiently well. Pupils do not have enough reading experiences and opportunities. Their reading skills are not well developed. Leaders should ensure that staff read to pupils regularly and pupils have the chance to read widely in order to develop reading skills that are appropriate to their stage and a love of reading.
- The teaching of phonics is jumbled and does not follow the planned curriculum. Pupils' needs are not being met and they are not helped to learn their sounds effectively. Leaders should ensure that teachers are well trained to deliver phonics and identify pupils who will benefit most from structured input.
- The curriculum in the sixth form is not ambitious enough. It is not coherently planned, and there is not a sharp enough focus on developing students' functional skills. As a result, students do not develop the knowledge and skills they need to be successful when they leave school. Leaders need to develop an ambitious and coherently planned curriculum for the sixth form that builds on prior learning and ensures that students are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or care.
- Leaders have not yet implemented a well-coordinated plan of wider opportunities for pupils. As a result, not all pupils have enough opportunities to engage in the wider community and learn how to be active citizens. Leaders need to continue to develop a wide and rich set of experiences that prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	104272
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10210910
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
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	134
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lesley Foster
Headteacher	Matthew Ball (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.mary-elliott.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school is part of a federation with a local primary special school.
- The school caters for pupils with SEND. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- There have been significant changes to the leadership team over the last three years. A new executive headteacher took up post in March 2019. The head of school from the federated primary school became head of both schools. New assistant headteachers and curriculum leaders were appointed in September 2021.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school, assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, representatives of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the school improvement partner, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with parents and carers and staff to gather general information about school life.
- The lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website and additional documents provided by the school during the inspection.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, English, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the federation's safeguarding lead, and the designated safeguarding lead for the school. Pupils' case files were reviewed. The single central record of the checks on staff's suitability to work with children was scrutinised.
- Inspectors met with staff to discuss their workload and the support they receive to carry out their roles.
- Inspectors examined behaviour support plans and incident records and observed the start of the day and informal times of the day to evaluate pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and pupil and staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Amanda Clugston, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Owen	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Tustian	Her Majesty's Inspector

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