

# Inspection of Mary Exton Primary School

St Michael's Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 0QA

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Inspection dates: 27 and 28 September 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires Improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Mary Exton Primary School is a happy place for pupils to learn and play. The school is like a big family where everybody supports each other and welcomes others. Positive relationships are quickly forged between staff and children in the early years and this mutual respect is further strengthened as pupils progress through the school.

Pupils behave well in lessons, on the playground and around the school. They show understanding and kindness towards each other and especially towards those who require additional support. They can talk to staff about the worries and concerns they may have. All forms of bullying are rare. This is because pupils know that staff will listen carefully and help them to feel happy and safe.

Pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities the school offers them. These include clubs and residential visits and day trips to learn about art and culture.

Pupils enjoy lessons because they learn about the things they will need to know in the future. They also learn about British values, such as democracy and how to be open and tolerant to others.

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

Leaders have developed the curriculum, including in early years, that is well sequenced, broad and relevant. In most subjects, the curriculum supports pupils to achieve ambitious goals and ensures they are ready for the next stage of their education. The development of language is a particular strength. When learning modern foreign languages, for example, pupils begin to learn both the essential vocabulary and verbal skills they will need at secondary school from the moment they start key stage 2. In the early years, words related to scientific enquiry, such as 'examine', 'find out' and 'question', are used by adults and mimicked by children. In a few subjects, leaders have not set out precisely the most important content that pupils need to learn. This makes it difficult for staff to plan for and assess the key knowledge that pupils have learned and understood.

Reading is a priority for the leaders of the school. The teaching of phonics is rigorous and younger children, including those in early years, quickly build their knowledge of sounds. Older pupils benefit from reading a range of interesting books. Staff encourage them to read often for pleasure and to share their favourite texts through, for example, 'open book' assemblies.

Leaders have ensured that the personal, social, health and economic curriculum is well structured, helping pupils to look after themselves and others. They are able to talk about protected characteristics. For example, during an assembly for older children, pupils were assertive about the rights of a boy to attend a 'princess' themed event if he wanted to. Pupils identify how they are feeling by using a colour

system, which allows those of all ages and abilities to articulate their emotions. Pupils feel that this makes them more resilient as they can develop their own strategies for coping with stress or sadness. There is also a range of opportunities to enhance the personal development of pupils. These include themed weeks, such as 'parliamentary week' and 'growth week', and the support of younger pupils at lunchtimes through a 'buddy' scheme.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well by the adaptations made by teachers and support staff in the classrooms. This ensures that every pupil is able to access a full curriculum. Leaders quickly identify when a pupil needs additional support, a process which starts even before they join the school. Appropriate plans are in place for those pupils with challenging behaviours, developed with the assistance of local agencies and organisations.

School leaders' 'firm but fair' expectations for pupils' behaviour in lessons ensure a calm and purposeful learning environment. Leaders also work hard to ensure that attendance is as high as possible. If a pupil is regularly absent from school, a bespoke intervention is put in place to support the pupil and their family.

Leaders at all levels are focused on ensuring each individual pupil receives the best care and support they need. The governing body supports the school through their oversight of improvement work, regular strategy meetings and monitoring visits. They understand the context of the school particularly well and offer appropriate challenge and support the leaders to ensure that the school focuses closely on the most important priorities. Staff feel that leaders are considerate of their well-being and workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are able to quickly identify those pupils who may be at risk of harm. Any concerns are quickly passed onto leaders, who take timely and appropriate action. The school has robust systems for training and induction which ensures that all staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe and protect themselves online. They can readily identify who they should report any concerns to and are confident that staff will act quickly to help them.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some subjects, staff have not been sufficiently trained to deliver the intended curriculum. When this is the case, teachers, rather than leaders, make decisions about which content to deliver and which aspects of pupils' knowledge they will assess. Leaders must ensure that all planning and training identifies the specific

knowledge pupils will learn in series of lessons and which aspects of pupils' knowledge staff should check have been remembered and understood.

## **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.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117329
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241109
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	174
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chairs of governing body</b>	Karen Gordan and Kirstie Buckridge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angharad Paterson and Tracy Clements
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.maryexton.herts.sch.uk">www.maryexton.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 December 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school uses no alternative provision providers.

## Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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.
- During this inspection, inspectors met with the co-headteachers and the deputy headteacher. Inspectors also met with a wide range of staff.
- Inspectors met with three members of the governing body, including the co-chairs of governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. They examined leaders' approach to safer recruitment. Inspectors also spoke to staff about their safeguarding knowledge and checked how well they understood their safeguarding responsibilities.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during playtimes and while in lessons.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents and carers about the school. Inspectors also spoke with staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, science, history and a modern foreign language. Inspectors spoke with staff who lead these subject areas. They visited lessons and spoke with teachers. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and viewed examples of their work. Inspectors also considered how leaders organise other subjects across the wider curriculum.
- Inspectors observed children in the early years and key stage 1 read to a trusted adult.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses to the Ofsted staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Michael Thomas, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Ania Vaughan	Ofsted Inspector

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