

Inspection of a good school: Milton Ernest CofE Primary School

Thurleigh Road, Milton Ernest, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK44 1RF

Inspection dates: 17 November 2022

Outcome

Milton Ernest CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are hardworking and polite. Their classrooms are a hive of activity. Pupils listen to staff, knowing it helps them complete their work well. Pupils see how staff watch them carefully, stepping in to help pupils if they need it.

Beyond the classroom, there are roles and activities that strengthen pupils' character and broaden their horizons. The elected school council make pupils' ideas a reality, such as making an outdoor reading area. Visiting different places of worship brings to life the many ways people practise their faith, helping pupils to understand and respect difference.

Pupils behave kindly and sensibly. They move in an orderly fashion around school and carefully cross the road to get to the village hall at lunchtime. In the early years, children learn to share and look after resources. This helps pupils work well in partnerships as they grow older. They will place a storybook between them to take turns reading or listening to each other's ideas about how to complete a calculation. Such strong relationships mean bullying rarely occurs. If it does, pupils can count on staff to put a stop to it. Being able to turn to staff for support contributes to pupils being safe in school.

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

Though leaders have plans to strengthen the curriculum further, what is in place works successfully. Leaders see the curriculum as being the precise knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn. They adopt or create clear plans to guide teachers, who use these to good effect. Teachers' observations help them determine if they need to rephrase an explanation or redo a demonstration. This includes in the early years. Staff listen in to children's imaginative play. They skilfully ask questions and build vocabulary to develop children's spoken language. Across the school, pupils typically keep up with the pace of learning. They demonstrate a strong recall of what they learned recently and in previous years. It is then no surprise that pupils' work reflects this detailed learning.

Nearly all aspects of the phonics programme work well. Leaders ensure staff understand how best to introduce pupils to the sounds letters make. Regular assessment informs what sounds pupils learn next. Staff also use these assessments to ensure all pupils receive a book containing words they can read aloud. There are very few pupils who find reading difficult. However, the reading of those who do is somewhat laboured and lacks expression. This affects how well they comprehend the text. Staff are not quick to promote strategies to address this.

Clear, workable systems are in place for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. If needed, teachers adjust activities or approaches to support a pupil's learning or behaviour. If these do not work, leaders will observe and assess pupils before supporting teachers to draft a plan of support. Parents meet with teachers and leaders to discuss and review these plans. The clarity and communication mean parents report positively on how the school supports their children.

The consistent use of the 'traffic light system' helps pupils demonstrate self-control. Pupils know they will receive a warning if they do not meet staff expectations. Staff are quick to spot and praise pupils behaving suitably. This ensures classrooms are positive places that are conducive to learning. On the rare occasion a pupil behaves unkindly, leaders take swift, sensitive action, ensuring all those involved receive support.

There is a suitable offer that caters for pupils' wider development. Extra-curricular clubs include French, gymnastics, and musical theatre. Some of these clubs complement inter-school competitions in which pupils fare well. Trained staff act as a 'listening ear' to pupils. These staff signpost pupils and their families to external agencies, who provide mental health and well-being support.

As they work in a small school, staff take on many roles to ensure the school day runs smoothly. Staff do this happily, knowing that leaders value their efforts. Governors check that school leaders consider ways they may reduce staff workload by, for example, backing the use of quality schemes of work to reduce time spent planning lessons. However, not all governors challenge and check school leaders' work and actions. While safeguarding systems are effective, governors have not checked these. This has allowed small inconsistencies to arise in some records.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff call upon their training, and the helpful posters on display, to identify and report pupils at risk of harm. Leaders then swiftly secure help. They make referrals to, and work with, children's services and their partner agencies. Though records are made, some lack useful details.

A well-considered curriculum means pupils learn how to keep safe. For example, pupils understand cyber-bullying, knowing what to do if they experience it.

Staff undergo the necessary checks before they start working with pupils. Leaders updated the single central register during the inspection to ensure that all these checks were recorded centrally, as required.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff ensure pupils at an early stage of reading receive books that are closely matched to their phonic knowledge. However, supervised reading practise does not always sufficiently allow pupils to develop fluency and expression. A small proportion of pupils make slower progress towards reading with speed, accuracy, and comprehension than they should. Leaders should ensure all staff understand how to support pupils beyond initial decoding ability, so all pupils quickly become proficient readers.
- The governing body's current practice for checking the school's work does not sufficiently identify key aspects in need of improvement, such as the minor weaknesses in safeguarding record keeping. This means that some issues are not identified or addressed in a timely way. Governors should receive training in establishing monitoring systems for all aspects of school life, so that these are as efficient as they could be.

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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Milton Ernest Voluntary Controlled Lower School, to be good in November 2012.

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

Unique reference number	109613
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10241656
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James Bass
Headteacher	Lisa Virnuls
Website	www.ewmeschools.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school became a primary school in September 2017, having previously been a lower school.
- The school is part of a federation with Eileen Wade Primary School. The headteacher of Milton Ernest Church of England Primary School works in an executive capacity across both schools in the federation.
- The school is part of the diocese of St Albans.
- The school has a religious character, Church of England, and was last inspected under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 23 March 2016. The next inspection is due by March 2024.
- There is before- and after-school childcare for pupils attending the school. It is run by school staff and managed by school leaders.
- Leaders do not currently use alternative provision for any pupils.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, senior teacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, and a governor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also reviewed curriculum documentation for three other subjects: art, computing and geography.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review records. The lead inspector met with the school secretary to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. Between them, inspectors also spoke to a governor, several staff and pupils, and reviewed surveys to further evaluate safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including the school development plan and minutes of governors' meetings.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. Inspectors also took account of the 41 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by reviewing the nine responses and eight free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them and reviewing the 11 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Webb

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022