

Inspection of a good school: Maulden Lower School

Church Road, Maulden, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 2AU

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

Outcome

Maulden Lower School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this small school. They know the school values such as truthfulness and determination and use these to be the best that they can.

Consideration and helpfulness are the expectation here. In the early years, children kindly share equipment. They praise and encourage each other. Older pupils are sports leaders, organising games for younger pupils at breaktimes. They enjoy taking responsibility as 'helping hands' in the classroom.

Pupils feel safe. They know that bullying is wrong and say it happens rarely. Pupils are confident to share their worries with their teachers. They trust them to resolve any incidents of unkindness.

In lessons, pupils know that their teachers expect them to try hard. They listen to their teachers and each other sensibly. They settle quickly to tasks and persevere with their learning.

Pupils feel part of the community here. Pupils and their parents use the book swap in school. They contribute items for local food banks as part of their harvest celebrations. At Christmas, older pupils serve tea for older residents. Regular woodland walks help pupils to know and appreciate their local area.

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

In the early years, leaders plan learning carefully. They introduce new ideas and skills, as well as taking account of children's interests. As pupils move through the school, there are clearly set out expectations for what pupils will learn over time. This means that pupils can develop their understanding and skills effectively. Older pupils apply the knowledge they learn to increasingly complex tasks confidently.

Most teachers make it easy for pupils to grasp new concepts by introducing new learning clearly. From the early years, teachers use questions to check how well pupils understand. They identify any gaps in pupils' understanding. A few teachers are still developing their curriculum expertise in some subjects. In these subjects, teachers are not as effective in helping pupils to achieve as well as they can.

The curriculum for teaching pupils to read is well structured. The youngest children in pre-school get to learn plenty of songs and rhymes. These help them to develop their understanding of the sounds in words. In Reception, pupils start to learn phonics straight away. They rapidly start to put sounds together to read simple words in well-matched books. Teachers continue to extend children's phonics knowledge in Year 1. Most pupils become confident, fluent readers. Teachers spot pupils who need extra help learning to read. Skilful adults provide extra practise with phonics, which enables these pupils to catch up.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the right support. In lessons, adults help pupils to focus on their learning. They explain information clearly and provide extra resources where needed. This enables pupils with SEND to join in lessons with their peers. A few pupils need a more personalised curriculum. These pupils get carefully planned learning, together with the support and encouragement they need to succeed.

Trips to educational sites enrich the curriculum, for example, in history. Older pupils can join a residential trip. This provides an opportunity for them to develop their confidence and resilience. Older pupils, including those with SEND, take on responsibilities around the school. Pupils can develop their talents and interests at sporting clubs and events, or at the gardening club.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about healthy lifestyles and relationships. Leaders have developed an inclusive culture. Pupils learn to use sign language in weekly assemblies. They also learn about different religions. They are welcoming and tolerant of others.

Behaviour in classes and around the school is good. Leaders have put in place consistent routines and expectations. These help pupils to know what to do and ensure that learning is not disrupted. In the early years, the youngest children get support to manage their feelings and behaviour. They learn to listen carefully to adults and each other.

Staff appreciate the support of leaders. They feel part of a supportive team. Governors are visible and accessible in school; they are considerate of the well-being of staff. Following recent changes, leadership is developing within the school. Several middle leaders are new to their roles. They are still establishing their skills to review, evaluate and adjust systems and provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff are well trained to spot, record and act on any safeguarding concerns. Leaders are proactive and persistent in seeking help from external agencies, such as social services, for pupils and their families. Appropriate checks are in place to ensure that adults are suitable to work in school. Records of these checks are accurate and regularly monitored. Governors carry out their statutory safeguarding duties diligently. Pupils learn to stay safe online through the curriculum and workshops. They also learn about road safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, some teachers are developing their subject knowledge. In these subjects, while most pupils already achieve well, their achievement could be strengthened further. Leaders should continue to develop the expertise of teachers to ensure that all pupils are supported to achieve as well as possible in all subjects.
- Several middle leaders are new to their roles. They have not yet established consistent systems to identify what is working well, or not, and to adjust provision when improvements are required. Leaders should continue to build the skills and capacity of middle leaders to ensure that the planned curriculum is implemented equally well across subjects.

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 school to be good in October 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	109472
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10255196
Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Carl Field
Headteacher	Kathryn Dwyer
Website	www.mauldenlower.com
Date of previous inspection	20 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not use any off-site providers of alternative education.
- The school includes nursery provision for pupils from the age of two years.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with school leaders, including the chair of the governing body, governors, subject leaders and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector spoke with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- The inspector considered 33 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 17 free-text comments. She also considered 16 responses to the staff survey and 18 responses to the pupil survey.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil at this school. She also observed the behaviour of pupils at breaktimes and around the school.

Inspection team

Lynne Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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