

# Inspection of a good school: Mowbray School

Masham Road, Bedale, North Yorkshire DL8 2SD  
Harrogate Road, Ripon HG4 1SU

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Inspection dates:

25 and 26 April 2023

## Outcome

Mowbray School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils are keen to get to school each day. Staff are very caring and supportive. Relationships between staff, pupils and parents are positive. Parents speak highly of the care, support and communication that staff provide for pupils. One parent, echoing the views of others, commented, 'I feel part of a team as a parent.'

Leaders are committed to every pupil achieving their best. There are no limits to what staff believe their pupils can achieve. They ensure pupils have access to high-quality experiences. Staff support all pupils to understand each other's feelings and to engage with other pupils, and adults, in a positive way. Pupils respond keenly to teachers. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are splendid. Bullying is rare; if there is any bullying, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. The values of 'Success, understanding, respect and endeavour' are well established.

Leaders prioritise the development of pupils' communication skills. Staff make effective use of objects, symbols and Makaton to enable all pupils to have a voice. Staff know the pupils well. They quickly identify even the smallest communication attempt and respond positively. Pupils working in the formal learning pathway confidently communicate their views. They feel safe and happy in school.

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

The new leadership of the school has ensured the curriculum is ambitious and carefully designed to fully meet the varying needs of the pupils. Training on questioning skills and a new 'Mowbray assessment system' have ensured that teachers' feedback to pupils is more meaningful in lessons. However, this new assessment system is only beginning to give information on the progress that the pupils are making over time and how well they are retaining the information they learn.

Leaders have reviewed and refined the curriculum. There are three learning pathways: semi-formal pastoral, semi-formal and formal. From children in the early years right through to older pupils, this curriculum provides well for pupils' independence, problem-solving, sensory and communication needs. Pupils can work towards qualifications. In key stage 4, for example, pupils have the opportunity to do GCSEs, entry-level qualifications and awards. Teachers ensure that pupils' curriculum choices are based on their education, health and care (EHC) plan targets, interests and desired career path. There are well-considered opportunities for work experience, careers discussion and preparation for college or apprenticeships.

The reading culture is strong. Staff use a variety of ways to introduce pupils to books and stories. The two school libraries are well used and enable pupils to enjoy books. Teachers use well-defined strategies to engage most pupils with sounds and symbols to prepare them for phonics-based teaching. All staff use a structured programme of teaching phonics for pupils of all ages. They ensure that the books pupils read match the sounds pupils know. This ensures that pupils are supported to become confident readers as soon as they are able.

The mathematics curriculum builds on what pupils have previously learned. Teachers introduce children to mathematical language straightaway. Regular practice and time to recap previous knowledge, in number for example, help pupils to remember what they have learned in the past. This helps pupils to build on their mathematical skills. Teachers use a range of resources to clearly illustrate mathematical concepts. This helps pupils to quickly grasp new learning.

Pupils' personal development is supported well. They are immersed in a wide range of activities that not only develop their physical health but also improve their confidence, physical strength, teamwork and friendships. For example, they visit the farm, and go mountain biking, canoeing and rock climbing. Pupils have a developing understanding of equality. Incidents of sexist or derogatory language are rare, and the school uses its curriculum to help pupils' understanding. There is a carefully sequenced programme for relationships and sex education and health education. Pupils learn about the changes that will happen to their bodies as they grow older. Older pupils understand the features of positive relationships and consent.

Governors know their school well. They have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and of what needs to improve further. Governors, informed by the headteacher's report, challenge the impact of leaders' actions to improve the quality of education. Staff are appreciative of the quality of training and the support from leaders they receive for their well-being. However, some staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey report that leaders are not always mindful of their workload pressures.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide effective support to pupils and their families. They have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are vigilant. They receive regular training to enable them to

spot potential signs of abuse. As a result, staff record concerns in a detailed and timely manner. Leaders make referrals to the placing local authorities as appropriate. They work well with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils get the support they need.

The focus on developing pupils' communication skills contributes to pupils' safety. Staff notice small changes in pupils' mood or appearance. They listen carefully to what pupils are telling them. Pupils following the formal learning pathway learn how to keep themselves safe online.

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

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

- Leaders have not yet fully evaluated the effectiveness of the new assessment system and the small steps of progress laid out in the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that this assessment is providing information on the progress each individual child should make.
- Some staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey do not always feel supported to manage their workload well. Leaders need to take appropriate and timely action to address the concerns raised.

## **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 January 2013.

## **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>	121779
<b>Local authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255904
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	308
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Caroline Potter
<b>Executive headteacher</b>	Rachel Hargreaves
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.mowbrayschool.co.uk">http://www.mowbrayschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Mowbray School is a special school in North Yorkshire.
- The school has two sites, one in Bedale, with pupils in early years to key stage 4, and another site in Ripon, for primary-age pupils only.
- The school admits pupils from the North Yorkshire area and a small number of pupils from neighbouring counties. It has a number of pupils from military bases.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. Most pupils have communication and interaction difficulties, cognitive impairment, autism spectrum conditions or sensory and physical needs.
- A new executive headteacher joined the school in September 2022.
- Most pupils access local authority transport to and from school.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

## 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 met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the deputy headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, pastoral staff and some non-teaching staff.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading and communication, mathematics, physical education and personal, social and health education. They talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. They spoke to some pupils about their learning. They looked at pupils' work and their personal plans.
- The lead inspector met four members of the governing body and the school improvement partner for the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff survey. Inspectors met with several groups of pupils to gather their views.
- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safer recruitment of staff and met with the safeguarding team. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Ann Muxworthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gill Booth

Ofsted Inspector

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