

Inspection of Maple Grove Primary School

St Agnell's Lane, Grove Hill, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 7BG

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like their school and the friends they make here. Some of their favourite lessons are mathematics, history and art. Pupils are keen to do well. They appreciate the changes to the curriculum new leaders are putting in place. At present, though, some pupils are not achieving as well as they could. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) need more targeted help from staff to secure their understanding of what they need to know.

Pupils are getting used to the five 'golden rules' that have just been introduced. They know how staff expect them to behave. They like earning 'marbles in a jar' to get a class reward. However, there are still occasions when a few pupils distract the learning of others. Pupils do not feel unsafe due to this but would like staff to do more to prevent these behaviours repeating.

Pupils know they can talk to adults about any concerns. They like time to share their feelings in 'draw and talk' time or when with the school therapy dog.

There are some opportunities for trips, but pupils would like more visits linked to the topics they are learning about. Pupils enjoy clubs such as choir, football and learning sign language.

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

Leaders have correctly identified the areas that need to improve and are working on them. However, much of this improvement work is still in its early stages.

The school has revised the curriculums for reading, writing and mathematics to ensure they are fit for purpose. Leaders have put in place clearly defined learning steps that pupils need to take in these subjects. Staff have had training on these curriculum updates. Teachers check pupils' understanding. However, sometimes these checks are not thorough enough, which limits how quickly gaps in knowledge can be addressed.

A new phonics programme has been implemented. Pupils, including children in early years, practise reading every day. Pupils enjoy the books adults choose. Staff regularly check the sounds pupils know. Less-confident readers receive additional reading support. However, these reading checks are not sufficiently precise. As a result, some pupils are reading books that are too easy for them. This limits the opportunities for these pupils to become more successful readers and catch up with their peers.

In the foundation subjects, leaders are in the process of updating the curriculum. This work is more developed in some subjects than others. Therefore, pupils are currently not getting the full depth of knowledge outlined in the curriculum's ambition.

Staff now accurately identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For some pupils with SEND, this has improved how they are assisted in class. In the best examples, pupils have work that is matched to specific needs and advice from specialists is being acted upon. However, provision for pupils with SEND remains inconsistent. In some parts of the school, expectations are not high enough for these pupils and too little is done to meet their needs. Therefore, some pupils with SEND are not achieving as well as they could.

Children in the early years now have access to a stimulating learning environment and engaging learning activities. The curriculum has been recently redesigned to ensure children are better prepared for Year 1. However, staff are still getting to grips with how they deliver the aspirational curriculum which leaders have rightly put in place. This means that there are still some inconsistencies in how well activities match children's needs. Some work set lacks the ambition that leaders intend.

The school can be calm and purposeful. However, pupils do have concerns about how others can distract them from their learning in class or be unkind at breaktimes. A new behaviour policy has been recently introduced. Staff are getting used to this policy and how best to meet the needs of these unsettled pupils. Consequently, some low-level disruption continues.

Most pupils attend school regularly. Leaders' actions have resulted in fewer pupils persistently missing school.

The curriculum that teaches pupils about values and respect has also only recently been updated. Pupils have an emerging understanding of equality and democracy. They do not always know about appropriate language to use and when it may be derogatory. Pupils are aware of other faiths and religions. Pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles and stay safe.

Staff are positive about the direction the school is moving in. They appreciate leaders checking on staff's welfare and workload.

Governors have been supported by the local authority to ensure they are better equipped to fulfil their statutory duties and to hold leaders to account. Governors are no longer over-reliant on this external support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some parts of the curriculum are still being updated. Not all subjects have enough explicit or precise detail of how pupils' knowledge will build over time. This means some pupils are not learning what leaders intend and many have developed misconceptions. Leaders need to signpost more specifically the key knowledge they want pupils to learn. Leaders and teachers need to check accurately that pupils have learned this knowledge securely.
- Some staff's expectations for pupils with SEND are too low or inconsistent. This means these pupils do not do as well as they could because staff do not precisely identify the right ways to help them. Staff need support to know how to adapt activities more accurately to these pupils' needs and ensure activities set for pupils with SEND are suitably ambitious. Leaders need to check that this happens.
- Checks on how well weaker readers are achieving are not robust enough. This means pupils who need help with reading are not catching up quickly enough. Leaders need to train staff to accurately check pupils' reading ability and then match reading books and additional support appropriately.
- There are instances of low-level disruption that disturb the flow of lessons. Too often, pupils have their learning interrupted. Staff need to ensure the new behaviour policy is consistently applied and that effective strategies are put in place to prevent unwelcome behaviours being repeated.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	135221
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10287111
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Allyson Woodhouse
Headteacher	Sam Woodcock
Website	www.maplegrove.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher was appointed in January 2023. There have been three changes of headteacher since 2021.
- The current early years leader started in May 2023 and the new special educational needs coordinator has been in post September 2023.
- The school runs and manages its own before- and after-school clubs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and physical education. For the deep dives, inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke with teachers and support staff. The lead inspector also heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors also looked at documentation relating to the curriculum in other subjects.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the local authority school improvement partner.
- The lead inspector spoke to the chair of governors and two other members of the governing body.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's own self-evaluation and school improvement plan. They also reviewed local authority advisers notes of visits and action plans relating to governance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses gathered through Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, which included 19 free-text comments. One of the inspectors also spoke to parents at the school gate. There were 12 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. However, inspectors spoke to several pupils from different year groups during the inspection.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Laura Hewer

Ofsted Inspector

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