

# Inspection of a good school: Maharishi Free School

Cobbs Brow Lane, Lathom, Ormskirk, Lancashire L40 6JJ

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 October 2023

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Edwards. The school is part of the Maharishi School Trust Ltd, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Birnbaum OBE.

## What is it like to attend this school?

The school has uneven expectations of pupils across the primary and secondary phases. Pupils in the primary phase benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. In contrast, pupils in the secondary phase do not have the opportunity to learn as wide a range of subjects.

Pupils are well supported to develop positive attitudes to learning. They learn how to prepare their minds so that they are ready to learn. This helps pupils to enjoy lessons without any low-level disruption.

Overall, pupils learn well in the subjects they study. This is because they are usually supported to learn new knowledge well. For the most part, they achieve well in these subjects.

Pupils are taught how to manage themselves and the choices they make. They understand how to look out for, and look after, each other. For example, they show interest in each other in their day-to-day interactions and through the school's well-being forum. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils value and actively seek out new experiences to grow as a person. They often demonstrate very positive attitudes to their wider development. Pupils enjoy the range of clubs and activities that the school provides. For example, many pupils value participating in sporting competitions or developing their leadership traits through the school magazine.

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

The school demonstrates a credible intent to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences that they may encounter in their future lives. The school successfully ensures that pupils benefit from high-quality personal development and care. However, those responsible for leadership and governance have not ensured that all pupils benefit as much as they should from a suitably rich and balanced curriculum.

The school provides children in the Reception Year, and pupils in Years 1 to 6, with an academic curriculum that is as broad and ambitious as it should be. In contrast, pupils in Years 7 to 9 follow a much narrower curriculum that is not comparable in breadth or ambition to the national curriculum. Furthermore, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are only able to study this same limited range of subjects. While this adequately prepares pupils for the next stage of their education, this narrowing impedes the richness of the education that pupils experience.

In the areas of the curriculum that the school does provide, subject content is suitably ambitious and delivered in a sensible order. This helps pupils to successfully build on their prior learning so that they know and remember more. However, in the early years, some aspects of the curriculum do not prepare children as well as they should for what they will learn in later years.

Overall, the school ensures that primary and secondary curriculums are delivered effectively. Pupils often benefit from clearly presented subject matter and suitably demanding opportunities to practise and apply the knowledge that they learn. Many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), confidently know and remember much of what they learn. However, the quality of curriculum delivery varies across some year groups and subjects. This hinders how well some pupils recall and use the knowledge that they have been taught.

Teachers make secure use of assessment strategies to identify what pupils know and what they can do. For the most part, they make good use of this information to inform what pupils should learn next.

Recent developments to the teaching of early reading ensure that many pupils develop into confident and fluent readers. Pupils typically gain the phonics knowledge required to read and communicate well. The school accurately identifies any gaps in pupils' reading knowledge and provides effective support to help them to catch up. This supports pupils' readiness to learn other parts of the curriculum.

The school accurately identifies the needs of pupils with SEND. These pupils are well supported to learn well in subject lessons. Where necessary, they also benefit from appropriate wider support for their emotional or social needs. The school's suitably focused efforts to engage with parents and carers about this support ensures that many parents are highly satisfied with the support that their children receive.

Pupils usually behave well in lessons and around the school site. Typically, they rise to the school's high expectations and follow established routines. Pupils cooperate well with each other and with staff. They are respectful of their environment. Staff intervene appropriately when pupils occasionally fall short of the school's expectations.

Pupils benefit from well-designed personal development opportunities. They confidently articulate what they have learned about safety, feelings, people and relationships. Pupils of all ages understand how to look after their physical and mental health. Pupils in the secondary phase benefit from a well-connected range of careers education, information, advice and guidance opportunities. These pupils feel well informed about choices for the future.

The school is appropriately mindful of ensuring effective engagement with parents. Overall, this enables most parents to be well involved in their children's education. The school has firm plans to strengthen this even further so that parents fully appreciate the opportunities and support that their children receive.

The school carefully considers what it can do to support and develop staff. Staff benefit from opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and practice. Their workload and well-being are understood and attentively supported.

Despite their oversights leading to some weaknesses in the breadth of the curriculum, those responsible for leadership and governance appropriately understand their wider roles. They ensure that statutory duties are undertaken diligently. They support and challenge others positively in the spirit of the school's ethos.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 11 does not include a sufficiently broad range of subjects. This means that pupils in these year groups do not benefit from an education that is as ambitious as the national curriculum. The school should provide all pupils with meaningful opportunities to study a suitably broad and ambitious range of subjects.
- The school has only recently begun to strengthen the links between the curriculums in the Reception Year and Year 1. This means that, in some places, children are not as ready for their learning in Year 1 as they should be. The school should ensure that the early years curriculum prepares children well enough for the next stage of their education.
- In some subjects and year groups, teachers' pedagogical and subject knowledge is uneven. This leads to variability in the quality of curriculum delivery. As a result, some

pupils do not know and remember all that they should. The school should ensure that all teachers have the knowledge and skills that they need to deliver the curriculum well.

## 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137498
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10240476
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	230
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Ian Birnbaum
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lisa Edwards
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.maharishischool.com">www.maharishischool.com</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	8 and 9 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Maharishi Free School is a non-religious, non-denominational school. It is part of the Maharishi School Trust Ltd, a single academy trust.
- The school is located at two separate sites. Pupils from Reception to Year 6 are educated at one site, while pupils from Years 7 to 11 are educated at another.
- The school makes use of two registered alternative providers to provide full- and part-time education for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- 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.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. They met with representatives of the academy trust and of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also held discussions with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils who have additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke with some parents during the inspection.

## **Inspection team**

Michael Pennington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Bather

Ofsted Inspector

Mavis Smith

His Majesty's Inspector

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