

Inspection of Millfield First and Nursery School

Monks Walk, Buntingford, Hertfordshire SG9 9DT

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know and display the school values of 'respectful, determined, proud'. These values underpin the way they learn and play together.

In lessons, pupils know that their teachers want them to do well. Children in the early years have plenty of interesting options to inspire learning. Older pupils try hard with tasks that are set for them. Pupils are confident that adults will help them if they find things tricky. They leave prepared for learning in their next school.

Pupils understand the school rules and how these help to keep them safe. They show positive attitudes such as perseverance and resilience. When required, pupils get extra help to manage their behaviour. In lessons and around the school most pupils behave well.

Breaktimes are energetic and fun. There is lots of space to run and play. There are games such as quoits and lots of equipment to play with. Peer mentors are ready to offer a helping hand to anyone who needs it. The 'buddy bench' is used well so everyone can join in.

Pupils try out new interests at clubs such as sewing or Lego. They learn to keep fit and healthy with regular exercise and lessons about sensible food choices.

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

The school is ambitious for all pupils to achieve well. The school adapts curriculum plans to take account of the changing needs of pupils joining the school. These plans set out learning in small steps from the early years, so that pupils can develop the knowledge and skills they need.

In most subjects, pupils learn well. Teachers regularly check what pupils know, using this information to plan pupils' next steps or extra practice. In the early years, adults provide a wide range of carefully selected activities to secure and extend new ideas. Across the school, teachers introduce new skills step by step. They provide extra equipment or practical examples to help pupils to understand difficult concepts. In these subjects, most pupils achieve standards close to those expected nationally.

In a few subjects, the curriculum is rightly evolving to strengthen what pupils know and can do. In these subjects, pupils are engaged in their learning but some pupils learn less well. Subject leaders are knowledgeable in revising these plans. They are developing their skills to ensure that all teachers are consistently teaching these subjects well.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn in class alongside their peers. Adults seek out and follow advice so they can put things in place to help pupils with SEND to focus, join in lessons and learn well. However, a

small minority of parents lack confidence in the help that the school provides for pupils with SEND.

The curriculum for teaching phonics is clearly set out so that children in the early years can start learning to read straight away. Teachers get the right training and support to teach reading well. They regularly check how pupils are faring. They use this information to adjust lessons so that pupils can practise their skills at the right level. Teachers quickly spot any pupils who fall behind in learning to read and put extra help in place. Most pupils learn to read confidently and accurately. Older pupils are enthusiastic about the books they read. Pupils enjoy the stories and poems that their teachers share with them.

Routines in place across the school help pupils to understand and follow the expectations for behaviour. Adults are consistent in their use of kindness and encouragement to help pupils behave well. Relationships between adults and pupils are a strength of the school. There are many systems in place to help pupils to make the right behaviour choices.

The school is tenacious in encouraging regular and punctual attendance. The school works with families to understand and reduce any barriers to good attendance. Plans are in place to continue to improve attendance for the few pupils who are absent too often.

The school extends learning beyond the classroom. The extensive school grounds are used well. The running track is in place for regular exercise and the pond helps pupils to learn about nature. Pupils take part in events such as cross country running and football tournaments. They raise funds for local and national charities. Pupils develop kind and tolerant attitudes towards others.

Governors work hard to provide support and challenge for leaders. They check that their work makes a difference. They seek out and consider the views of pupils, staff and parents. However, a small minority of parents do not feel well informed about some decisions made by the school. They would welcome improvements to communication.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, some pupils currently achieve less well. The school should ensure that all subject leaders have the capacity to ensure that the curriculum is designed and consistently taught well so that pupils learn well across the full curriculum.

- A small number of parents of pupils with SEND have concerns about, or do not understand, the support in place for their children. This small minority of parents feel that leaders could communicate with them more effectively. The school should continue and further strengthen communication with parents to secure their confidence in, and understanding of, the school's work.

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 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	117309
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10255034
Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alex Tomkins
Headteacher	Laura Kennedy-Weeks
Website	www.millfield.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 February 2009, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides before- and after-school care on site.
- The school does not use any registered or unregistered providers of alternative education.

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.
- Inspectors met with senior staff in the school, including the headteacher, chair of governors and other governors, and the designated lead for safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading; mathematics; science; and art and design. 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 some samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View. This included 65 comments from parents in the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynne Williams, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rebecca McCutcheon	Ofsted Inspector
Conor Heaven	His Majesty's Inspector

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