

Inspection of Meppershall Church of England Academy

107 High Street, Meppershall, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5LZ

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2024

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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Margaret Newman. The school is part of Poppy Hill Church of England Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Caren Earp, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Perry Melvin Huntley.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy. They enjoy attending school. Pupils take great pride in the school values and demonstrate them in daily life. As a result, there are strong relationships between pupils as well as with staff. Pupils go out of their way to make sure that everyone has someone to play with. Pupils follow the school's clear expectations of behaviour.

Pupils enjoy the well-chosen activities that teachers set them. Pupils complete these to the best of their abilities. Many produce work of a high standard. In 2023, some Year 6 pupils did not achieve as well as they should have. Many of these pupils had joined the school late so did not get all of their education here. Those pupils who have been at the school longer achieve well.

Pupils gain independence as they move through the school. As they move into Year 4, pupils have a leadership responsibility, for example being a hall monitor. Year 5 and 6 pupils travel to another, larger site. They navigate their way around the site successfully and appreciate all the facilities that are on offer to them. Pupils are confident and well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

The school has been through considerable change over recent years. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that pupils 'love learning'.

The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. In most subjects, the knowledge that pupils should learn, and when they should learn it, is set out clearly, starting from early years. In these subjects, teachers use their subject knowledge well. They revisit important knowledge regularly to ensure that pupils remember it. Children in the early years are engaged and excited by the activities which teachers plan for them. Pupils make strong progress in many areas of learning because of effective teaching.

In a few subjects there are new curriculum plans. These are not yet fully in place. In these subjects, teachers are less effective in planning activities that build on what pupils already know. Pupils find it harder to remember and use important knowledge in these subjects.

Staff teach phonics well. The school ensures staff have the necessary expertise to do so. Children begin learning phonics as soon as they start in Reception. Staff regularly check pupils' progress with reading. Pupils get any help they need to keep up swiftly. Pupils enjoy reading. They learn about new authors in daily story times. As a result, pupils progress well with their reading.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly and effectively. The school works closely with parents and

outside agencies, if appropriate, to ensure that pupils get the support they need. Staff are well trained to adapt learning activities across the curriculum for pupils. This ensures that pupils with SEND receive the right support and access the curriculum successfully.

The school tried to help those pupils who joined in Year 6 to achieve the standards expected by the end of key stage 2. However, for some pupils this was not possible in the time that they had in the school. Published key stage 2 test and assessment results do not reflect accurately the quality of education in the school.

Staff manage behaviour well. The school ensures that its approach to behaviour is supportive of pupils' individual needs. On the rare occasions when unkind behaviour occurs, pupils know that adults will address it. Pupils respond well to the positive rewards that they receive. They strive to gain 'merits' for their efforts. The school analyses pupils' attendance carefully. The school works closely with the families of pupils who are frequently absent to improve attendance.

The school has constructed a broad personal development programme. Through lessons, assemblies and working with external agencies, pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. From the early years, pupils learn how to manage their emotions. They can identify how they are feeling and, as a result, know how to manage their emotions. Pupils know the importance of staying physically fit. Older pupils have a wide range of sporting clubs available to them, which extend their interests. Volunteers from the local community attend the school regularly to talk about their careers. This gives pupils an insight into what they can aspire to.

The school supports staff well. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Governors and trustees have worked through a complex and time-consuming situation as the school has transitioned to a primary school. They have done this thoughtfully, considering the education of the pupils in the local area. However, governors have not had a clear oversight of the whole school to ensure consistent provision for all pupils.

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, curriculum planning is new, and it is not organised in a way that builds on pupils' previous learning. As a result, teachers are unable to build effectively on the knowledge that pupils already have in these subjects. The school should ensure that, in all subjects, curriculum planning is structured to ensure that knowledge is ordered in a way that enables teachers to plan activities

and sequences of lessons that enable pupils to consolidate and build on what they have learned previously.

- Governors and trustees have not been sufficiently focused on the quality of the provision for all pupils. As a result, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of education that pupils receive. The school should ensure that those responsible for governance develop their oversight of the whole school so that they can support and challenge leaders to ensure that provision across the whole school is of consistently high quality.

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	148640
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10295138
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy Converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	221
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Perry Melvin Huntley
CEO of trust	Caren Earp
Headteacher	Margaret Newman
Website	www.meppershallacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as part of an academy trust on 1 April 2021. It is part of Poppy Hill Church of England Multi-Academy Trust.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2021.
- The predecessor school, Meppershall Church of England Academy, was inspected in September 2019 and was judged to be inadequate.
- The school changed from a lower school to a primary school in September 2021. New pupils arrived from other lower schools into Year 5 and 6.
- The school is based on two sites. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils are taught on the Henlow Church of England Academy site, which is also part of the trust.
- The school has a Christian religious character. The school's most recent inspection of its denominational education, under section 48 of the Education Act, took place in June 2023. The next inspection will be within eight years.
- 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 educational 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 lead inspector met with the chair of governors from the local governing body and two trustees.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the Diocese of St Albans.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history, and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work.
- 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 gathered the views of pupils by speaking to them during lessons, in the dining hall and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of staff to gather their views of the school. They also considered 15 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- The inspectors considered 70 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Katie Devenport, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lesley Stevens

Ofsted Inspector

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