

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: New Marston Primary School

New Marston Primary School, Copse Lane, Headington, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX3 0AY

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 March 2025

Outcome

New Marston Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Rachel Vlachonikolis. The school is part of the River Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Paul James, and overseen by a board of trustees chaired by Jeremy Long.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are thriving at this happy, welcoming school. They are full of enthusiasm for learning and behave exceptionally well. Pupils are immensely proud to belong to such a diverse school community where everyone is valued for their own unique qualities. Parents and carers cannot praise the school enough. One parent, typical of many, commented, 'The school is a fantastic, inclusive school which my children love. The wide diversity of languages and cultures is incredible and celebrated.'

The school's ambition for every pupil to 'aim higher, reach further and shine brighter' is lived out in daily life. High aspirations for every pupil permeate this school. As a result, pupils achieve well, academically and personally. They leave the school as well-rounded individuals, confident and ready to embrace the challenges ahead of them.

Pupils benefit from extensive enrichment opportunities, including the school's 'electives' programme. This broadens pupils' horizons and generates many new interests and potential hobbies. Pupils enjoy trying out activities such as cheerleading and rock climbing. They also value that they have a 'voice' in what is on offer. Pupils' social development is enhanced considerably through the numerous outdoor lunchtime activities. These range from den building and imaginary play to sporting activities.

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

Aspirational, effective leadership has ensured that the school has grown from strength to strength. Refinements to the curriculum and teaching have led to improved outcomes. The impact of this is shown in pupils' strong achievement in the end of key stage 2 statutory assessments.

The school's curriculum is ambitious, interesting and well considered. Teaching is lively and engaging. Across the curriculum, staff use their strong subject knowledge to introduce pupils to a growing repertoire of vocabulary. They regularly check how well pupils are learning, adjusting lesson content to address misconceptions or gaps in knowledge. Interesting activities spark pupils' curiosity. In most subjects, these approaches enable pupils to build their learning securely. However, in some wider curriculum subjects, pupils' knowledge is not as secure. This is because some learning activities do not focus precisely on the intended learning or deepen pupils' understanding.

Reading is prioritised and taught well. This gets children in early years off to a great start to learning to read. The school wastes no time in providing extra support for any pupils who are not keeping up with the school's programme. Pupils' reading 'journey' continues through the school. They read and analyse good-quality texts, which they use to inform and shape their writing. Over time, pupils write with greater fluency, accuracy and complexity, showing awareness of audience and purpose. However, the quality of younger pupils' writing is sometimes hampered by weak handwriting and sentence construction. The school has recognised this and has recently introduced a new writing strategy. Currently, it is too soon to see the full impact of this work.

An unwavering commitment to inclusion and equality runs through every layer of this school. Disadvantaged pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are cherished. The school is tenacious in supporting pupils to overcome barriers to learning so they experience success and enjoy school. Additional needs are swiftly identified and effective support put in place. Pupils in the specially resourced provision benefit from expert teaching. In addition, the school's enhanced provision, 'The Willows', provides a bespoke curriculum within a small, nurturing environment. Provision supports pupils well in developing their early communication, language and social skills.

From children's very first days in Nursery, staff forge positive, warm relationships with them. This enables children in early years and beyond to feel safe and secure in the care of staff. Pupils demonstrate important values, such as respect, integrity and kindness. They gain meaningful leadership experience by being a school councillor or a prefect and appreciate the responsibility that this entails. Pupils enjoy learning about different cultures and beliefs. They learn that everyone has a place and can shine in our world. The annual international event is a special highlight of the year, bringing families together in celebration of diversity.

Everyone here works together for the benefit of pupils whose needs are at the heart of all decision-making. The school makes sure that workload is managed so that staff can focus their attention on the most important aspects of their role. Staff work as a cohesive team and are proud to work at the school.

The trust maintains systematic oversight of the school. Governance roles and lines of accountability are clear. Effective information enables trustees and governors to have the knowledge they need to inform their strategic decision-making and drive for continued improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The early writing curriculum has not given enough priority to letter formation and sentence construction. This means that some pupils have not secured this important foundational knowledge well enough. Weaknesses in these aspects of pupils' knowledge and skills hamper the quality of their writing, particularly in early years and key stage 1. The school needs to fully embed its new writing strategy and ensure that this is having the impact that it intends.
- In some foundation subjects, learning activities do not focus precisely enough on the most important knowledge pupils need to learn and remember. Additionally, some activities do not deepen pupils' learning well enough. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge as well as they could, and, at times, learning is superficial. The school needs to ensure that staff are supported to implement the curriculum consistently well in all foundation subjects.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection

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 for overall effectiveness in October 2019.

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	143951
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10341838
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	292
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jeremy Long
CEO of the trust	Paul James
Headteacher	Rachel Vlachonikolis
Website	www.nmps.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has specially resourced provision for up to eight pupils with SEND. This provision is for pupils who are deaf and pupils who have profound hearing loss. All pupils who attend this provision have an education, health and care plan. Currently six pupils attend this provision.
- In September 2024, the school created enhanced provision, known as 'The Willows', for up to nine pupils between the ages of five to eight. The provision is led by a qualified senior teacher from the school. The Willows caters for pupils with significant needs who attend New Marston Primary School and for pupils who attend other schools in the locality. Pupils attend The Willows from Monday to Thursday and are based at their 'home' schools on Friday. Currently, seven pupils attend The Willows. Five of these pupils are dual registered with their 'home' schools.
- The school has nursery provision for two- to four-year-old children. Most children attend the Nursery part time.
- The school runs a breakfast and an after-school club for pupils who attend the school.

- The school is one of 30 schools in the River Learning Trust. The board of trustees delegates some responsibilities to the local governing body. This is set out in the trust's scheme of delegation.
- The headteacher took up post in July 2020.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. She held an online meeting with two members of the board of trustees, including the chair. The inspector met with the deputy director of primary education for the trust. She also met with six members of the local governing body.
- The inspector considered the views of staff during meetings with them and took account of their responses to Ofsted's staff survey. She considered parents' responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also talked with some parents on the morning of the second day of the inspection.
- Pupils' views were considered during meetings with them. The inspector also talked with pupils during visits to lessons and at other times of the day, such as lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Sue Cox, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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