

Inspection of North Marston Church of England School

School Hill, North Marston, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire MK18 3PE

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 June 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are confident and caring at this small, inclusive school. Pupils are proud to say that they help each other. They thrive when taking on responsibilities, such as the older pupils helping the younger ones at playtimes. Pupils learn about the school's values of compassion, courage and justice from the beginning of Reception. They enjoy celebrating and learning about these in assemblies and through the curriculum. For example, children in Reception learn about traditional stories such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' and 'The Enormous Turnip', and staff use these as starting points to explore concepts like 'courage' meaningfully.

Pupils with SEND receive excellent support to help them achieve well. Staff and pupils learn Makaton sign language to aid communication, and leaders work closely with outside agencies such as speech and language and occupational therapy, where needed. One pupil summed this thoughtful approach up by saying, 'At our school we include everyone, especially pupils who need extra help.' Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Bullying is not a part of school life but if any incidents do occur, adults do all they can to resolve issues quickly and fairly.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the precise knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Staff have secure subject knowledge and adopt teaching approaches that help pupils to remember what is being taught. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their subjects and understand how they learn well by revisiting ideas as they progress through school. For example, in geography, pupils look at trade in different ways and explore increasingly complex maps and grid references. Pupils value trips such as walks in the local environment, learning about Schorne's Well and visiting Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum. There are strong links to local history through the North Marston historical society, and these are used effectively to support pupils' learning. In some subjects, however, the curriculum is at an earlier stage of development, which means pupils are not yet achieving all that they could.

Leaders rightly prioritise teaching phonics and early reading. Phonics teaching is planned carefully, and is becoming increasingly effective. If any pupil falls behind, they are helped to catch up to their peers. Most pupils take home books that are matched closely to the sounds they have learned, but for some pupils staff are still refining and checking this to make sure that books are not too challenging. There is a clear approach to teaching reading which builds phonic knowledge, but this has only recently been implemented, so there is some further work to do to make sure that it is helping all pupils to learn consistently well. Leaders have a positive, relentless enthusiasm for literacy, which helps pupils to develop a love of reading. Staff promote the joy of books and literature at every opportunity. This is a strength of the school.

In Reception, leaders create a positive, inspirational hub of learning. Resources are planned carefully, fully accessible and support children, including those with SEND, to learn well from the beginning of their time in school. Staff have a detailed approach to assessing children's needs, and drive learning forwards by emphasising knowledge and building vocabulary without limits or barriers. Staff use carefully chosen equipment in the classroom and the outside area, along with rhymes, songs and stories, to create an exceptional early years provision where children are happy and absorbed in their learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Leaders deliver an effective programme that links closely to the school's values. Staff use texts to support this in thoughtful, considered ways. Staff highlight positive role models to represent a range of beliefs and backgrounds to widen pupils' understanding. They invite visitors into school, such as an ex-pupil who has achieved sporting success as part of the England national rugby team. Pupils enjoy clubs and extra-curricular activities, such as football, netball, Makaton and choir. They are proud to take on roles such as school councillor and member of the eco-council.

Although some governors are new to the governing body, they work with determination to offer appropriate support and challenge to school leaders. Governors are skilled and knowledgeable. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. Most staff appreciate leaders' and governors' efforts to consider their workload and well-being. Leaders engage well with parents, who are supportive and keen to praise the hard work and dedication of staff at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise safeguarding at the school. They ensure that all staff receive appropriate training and know what the signs of abuse are. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns. Where needed, leaders work with external agencies to ensure pupils get help and support. Pupils know about how to keep themselves safe online and know that there are trusted adults to talk to if they are ever worried. Leaders carry out appropriate checks on adults before any employment starts at the school. Leaders keep accurate safeguarding records. These records, including safeguarding audits, are checked by governors and the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils are not achieving as well as they could across the curriculum. Where this is the case, recent changes to the curriculum, such as the school's approach to teaching phonics and early reading, are still being embedded and do not yet fully demonstrate impact on pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that recent curriculum development continues to be a focus so that every curriculum area equips pupils with the learning that helps them to achieve highly.
- In some foundation subjects, leaders have not identified and sequenced the precise knowledge that pupils need to learn. As a result, pupils do not always learn as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum for all subjects builds cumulative knowledge and vocabulary to support all pupils in knowing and remembering more.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	110412
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10268970
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Katherine du Plessis
Headteacher	Catherine Gouldstone
Website	www.northmarstonceschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Oxford.
- An inspection to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school's denominational education and worship, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, took place in April 2018.
- The school operates a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the early years leader, subject leaders and teaching and support staff.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, design and technology and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Oxford.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with the headteacher and the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the systems and processes in place to keep pupils safe in school. They reviewed the single central record, staff training and recruitment procedures and records of concern. Inspectors also spoke to teachers, support staff, pupils and governors about how well pupils are kept safe.
- Inspectors reviewed the records of attendance, behaviour and bullying incidents. They spoke with pupils to seek their views and experiences of the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during playtimes.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors also took into consideration the staff survey responses.

Inspection team

Carl McCarthy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tracey Brunton

Ofsted Inspector

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