

Inspection of Matching Green Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Little Laver Road, Matching Green, Harlow, Essex CM17 0QB

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this small village school. They are welcoming to visitors and to each other. Pupils value the diversity that those who arrive from other countries bring to the school community.

Relationships between adults and pupils are caring and respectful. Pupils know the school values of kindness, endurance, thankfulness, friendship and forgiveness. They try hard to show these. Bullying is not tolerated and occurs rarely. Pupils trust adults to resolve any issues that arise.

Pupils understand the school's rules. Any pupils who struggle to meet adults' high expectations receive help to improve. Pupils aim high in lessons. They are motivated to achieve well. Pupils enjoy the rewards they can earn for themselves and their class.

Trips, visitors and extra-curricular activities enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoy visiting the 'friendly club', where they get to know some of the village's older residents. They develop their talents through a range of after-school clubs, such as street dance, Spanish and various sports. Visitors such as firefighters, a rabbi and a guide dog for the blind enrich pupils' learning.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. They are mindful of the challenges presented by mixed-age classes and ensure there is no repetition. Curriculum plans set out the knowledge and skills pupils will learn and the order in which they should learn them. This enables pupils to build their learning logically and gradually over time.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They deliver the curriculum confidently and explain new learning well. Their skilful questioning enables them to check pupils' understanding or take learning further. Teachers use a range of assessment tools to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge. These include quizzes, practical activities and 'double-page spreads' at the end of a topic.

Behaviour is positive throughout the school. Pupils learn without disruption in the classroom and play harmoniously in the playground.

Leaders check to see how well the curriculum is working. They make changes to curriculum plans where appropriate. However, leaders' checks are not sufficiently rigorous or systematic. Consequently, leaders are not clear enough about the curriculum strengths and weaknesses.

The early years curriculum ensures that children leave Reception with the important knowledge and skills they need. For example, children plant hanging baskets and

grow vegetables. They care for their guinea pigs and watch with great excitement as a butterfly emerges from its cocoon. These activities prepare children effectively for the science curriculum in key stage 1.

Leaders describe reading as the 'golden thread' that is woven through the school's curriculum. Teachers choose high-quality books to support learning in all subjects. Early reading is a priority. As soon as children join Reception, they start to learn the sounds they need to become fluent readers. Adults identify pupils who need extra help and put this in place quickly. Occasionally, adults miss opportunities to reinforce pupils' knowledge of sounds. Adults do not always model the sounds that letters make clearly or give pupils sufficient opportunities to practise the sounds they have been taught.

Reading lessons in key stage 2 do not always focus sharply enough on what specific reading knowledge pupils need to learn. Pupils who are ready to deepen their learning may not get the challenge they need.

There is a clear system for identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that pupils' needs are met through adapted activities or additional adult support. This provision enables pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum as their peers and to achieve well.

Leaders are keen to offer pupils opportunities to develop beyond the academic. Older pupils can apply to be librarians. They set up displays and recommend books to younger pupils. In each class, members of the school council are democratically elected by their peers. They organise fundraising events to pay for more bins in the school grounds. Recently appointed eco-warriors plan to reduce the school's carbon footprint.

Governors bring a range of skills and experience to their role. They visit regularly to ensure they understand the school's strengths and next steps well. Staff value the professional development opportunities they receive. They appreciate leaders' efforts to reduce their workload and to look after their well-being. A small number of parents have a negative view of the school. However, most parents speak highly of their children's educational experience. Many praise the school's nurturing approach and strong focus on values.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and governors are trained in safeguarding. They receive regular updates to remind them of the risks to pupils' safety and welfare. Staff report any concerns they have. Leaders act on these promptly. They liaise with external agencies for advice and support so that vulnerable pupils and families get the help they need.

The school carries out the necessary checks on adults who are recruited. This ensures that adults are safe to work with children.

Pupils learn about personal safety in lessons. They talk to adults if they have any worries about safety. They are knowledgeable about ways of staying safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' checks do not always pick up the changes that are needed to ensure the curriculum is effective and all pupils' learning is secure. Leaders should make sure that their curriculum monitoring identifies clear strengths and weaknesses. This will support leaders to make the adjustments needed to improve the curriculum and maximise all pupils' progress.
- Pupils in the early stages of reading do not always receive the precise support they need to improve. Older pupils who are ready to deepen their learning are not always given the opportunities to move their learning on. Leaders should ensure that staff are trained to deliver a high-quality reading curriculum across the school that allows all pupils to reach their potential.

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	115126
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10287090
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	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Neil Banks
Headteacher	Amy Wareham
Website	www.matchinggreenprimaryschool.com
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides before-school care for pupils who attend. This is managed by school leaders.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was not making use of any alternative provision.
- The school has a Christian religious character. The most recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (section 48) took place in March 2019. The school will receive its next inspection within eight years of this date.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult. The lead inspector also looked at curriculum planning and a sample of pupils' work in other subjects, including computing, design and technology and history.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leaders to review records. She scrutinised the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. Inspectors also spoke with governors, staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors, including the chair and vice-chair of governors. She spoke on the telephone with a representative from the Diocese of Chelmsford and with the school's local authority school improvement partner.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including the school development plan, external reviews of the school and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors gathered the views of pupils by speaking with them during lessons, in the dining hall and at breaktimes. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents by speaking to parents at the school gate and by reviewing the 36 responses and 30 free-text responses submitted to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors considered any emails they received from parents.
- Inspectors gathered the views of staff by speaking with many of them and by reviewing the 16 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Suzanne Thrower

Ofsted Inspector

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