

Inspection of a good school: The Mary Bassett Lower School

Bassett Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 1AR

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like attending The Mary Bassett Lower School. They feel safe and know they are well cared for. Pupils welcome the new approaches to reading and mathematics. They enjoy learning about their new topics. Pupils are keen to do well. However, pupils still need more help from their teachers to make the best progress they can. They appreciate the rewards they can receive for their effort, attendance and conduct. Pupils are proud to receive the 'golden tickets' and 'rainbow badges'.

Pupils work well together, including in early years, and value their friendships. Overall, pupils learn in calm and orderly classrooms. If a pupil does not follow the 'Mary Bassett Way', pupils know teachers will deal with this. Pupils say that bullying is rare and are confident in leaders resolving this quickly should it occur. They like breaktimes and playing on the much loved 'pirate ship'. Some pupils would like more games and equipment to play with when outside.

Pupils participate in a range of school clubs. They also get to experience visits, trips and residential. They have enjoyed seeing a travelling theatre company, making habitats for wildlife in the school gardens and donating decorations for the local Christmas festival.

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

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the needs of all pupils. They have acted effectively on this to recently revise the whole curriculum. Leaders have created a curriculum that is ambitious and ensures pupils gain detailed knowledge in a logical order so they can achieve well. Leaders have provided extensive training for staff on curriculum

content and delivery. As a result, teachers have good subject knowledge and access to appropriate teaching materials. Some parts of the curriculum are in the early stages of implementation, and teachers are still getting to grips with this. Some pupils are not recalling all the knowledge leaders want them to know. This is because teachers are not yet matching activities well enough to the detailed knowledge pupils need to learn. Teachers are following the new curriculum; however, they are not always tailoring the work set to meet specific gaps in pupils' knowledge or giving enough time to fully check and address misconceptions pupils may have before moving on.

Reading is a priority in this school. Leaders have put in place a systematic phonics programme and ensure all pupils read and rehearse their phonics daily. Leaders use assessment well to ensure pupils make good progress in knowing sounds and reading fluently. Pupils who find reading tricky are given additional daily support to catch up. However, some of these pupils do not always have books well matched to their phonics ability, and staff do not check this often enough. This limits the progress these pupils make.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Adults working with these pupils adapt tasks and activities so that pupils with SEND can access the full curriculum in class with their peers. As a result, pupils with SEND meet their specific learning targets.

Children in Nursery and Reception get off to a good start at this school. Children access a range of learning experiences to help them be curious and active learners. They can apply their knowledge of letters, sounds, numbers and shape throughout the learning environment, and adults support them in their play to deepen their understanding. As a result, children are well prepared for Year 1.

Teachers have clear expectations of behaviour and apply the behaviour policy consistently and fairly. Pupils who have more challenging behaviours are managed well and with respect. Pupils engage in lessons, and little learning time is wasted.

Pupils are provided with high levels of pastoral care. They are regularly reminded who their trusted adults are. Leaders and teachers remind pupils of the 'Mary Bassett Way', which is to give something back to the community and be responsible citizens. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to be on the school council.

Staff feel that leaders, including governors, are mindful of their workload and well-being. Teachers have responded positively to the range of updates to the curriculum. They understand the reasons for these changes and can see the benefits. Most feel the new approaches are manageable and that leaders would listen to them if they needed support.

Governors have received effective training from the local authority and are well equipped at holding leaders to account. They fulfil their statutory duties well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe. Teachers ensure that pupils are reminded which trusted adults can help them if they have a concern. Pastoral support staff at the quiet lunchtime club give pupils additional opportunities to talk to adults about any worries. Leaders are proactive in making appropriate referrals to get pupils and families the help they need.

Pupils are also taught about how to stay safe online, and they learn about healthy relationships.

All checks on adults who work in school are thorough and monitored by leaders and governors. Staff have regular safeguarding training, and the system for identifying, reporting and referring concerns is robust.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In reading, some pupils who receive additional support are not catching up quickly enough. This is because their books are not always matched to their phonics ability. Teachers need to increase how frequently they check that pupils can rehearse their reading with books accurately matched to the sounds they are currently working on in class.
- In some subjects, the work set is not always matched precisely enough to the aims and ambitions of the curriculum. This means that some pupils are not making the progress they are capable of, as they do not develop the detailed knowledge leaders intend. Teachers need to ensure that they check that the activities they choose sufficiently link to and support the acquisition of the precise knowledge pupils need to know.
- In a range of subjects, teachers do not yet adapt activities or schemes well enough to address specific knowledge gaps pupils may have or check that pupils are secure in their knowledge before moving on. As a result, pupils are not always able to articulate or remember what they have learned. Teachers need to ensure that they regularly check individual pupil's understanding to identify and address misconceptions quickly and then adapt and tailor the learning to fill the specific gaps pupils may have.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2013.

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	109508
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10268604
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	361
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rob Merry
Headteacher	Hilary Wheeldon
Website	www.marybassett.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a lower school for pupils aged two to nine.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school clubs.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The current headteacher took up post in January 2022 and has a newly established senior leadership team.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and teachers.

- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the lead inspector spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke with teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met representatives from the local governing body. The lead inspector also spoke to the local authority school improvement advisor.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, local authority advisor visit reports and the school development plan.
- The lead inspector looked at the arrangements for safeguarding, including the single central record of recruitment checks. The lead inspector spoke with leaders about the systems and processes to support safeguarding and the safeguarding ethos in the school.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the 52 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 30 staff survey responses. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023