

Inspection of Marlbrook Primary School

Green Croft, Redhill, Hereford, Herefordshire HR2 7NT

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2022

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

The school was last inspected 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflects changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have memorable experiences that they cherish at Marlbrook Primary School. The school site, recently enhanced by an impressive extension project, is at the heart of the local community. The school is alive with activity from early in the morning until late in the afternoon. Many children enjoy attending the breakfast club provision that is offered to all.

Pupils behave very well. They are typically kind and polite to one another and treat adults with respect. They are proud to welcome visitors to their school. Such positive attitudes foster a happy environment that is conducive to purposeful learning.

Adults care about pupils and work hard to attend to their needs. Occasionally, there are incidents of bullying or unwelcome behaviour. Pupils trust staff to sort these issues out. Staff act quickly to deal with matters. Their swift actions help pupils to feel safe at school.

The range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits offered to pupils is a striking feature of school provision. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, participate in carefully planned activities that cater for different pupils' interests. These opportunities greatly enhance pupils' experiences at school.

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

Leaders ensure that pupils learn a broad range of subjects. Pupils with SEND, ably supported by adults, take part fully.

Curriculum coordinators have set out the key information that they expect pupils to know and remember in each subject. Staff check how well pupils learn this information in lessons and over time. The approach works well and pupils make good progress through the curriculum. However, in some subjects, such as history and music, the checks that staff make are not always specific enough. They do not always check on the smaller chunks of knowledge that pupils are expected to remember. This makes it difficult for staff to precisely identify what pupils have learned.

Leaders ensure that teachers have secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. Staff work as teams to review and discuss the approach to the way the curriculum is taught in specific subjects. In addition, subject coordinators work collaboratively with professionals from other schools. All of this helps to create an expectation and culture of ongoing professional development for staff. This reflects positively in lessons. Teachers provide clear explanations and useful examples to help pupils understand new concepts.

Adults teach pupils how to read well. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read take part in daily phonics lessons. These lessons build pupils' knowledge logically. Staff regularly hear pupils read from books that are closely matched to their individual abilities. As a result, pupils learn to read very well. Almost all pupils are confident, able readers by the time they leave the school. This helps ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Children in the early years have an excellent start to life at school. Adults have very high expectations about what these children can achieve, and these high expectations are realised. Staff seize every opportunity to engage with children in a purposeful and deliberate way. They teach and embed key curriculum content through all activities. Children thrive and relish learning in the setting.

Pupils across the school dress smartly and act sensibly. Most behave very well in lessons and are eager to learn. Sometimes, there are behaviour incidents - adults work hard to sort these out. However, leaders' approach to recording these incidents is not as effective as it should be. Sometimes, incident records are not precise enough. This makes it difficult for leaders to analyse trends and patterns of behaviour over time.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is exceptional. Leaders have carefully coordinated many aspects of school provision to develop pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. Older pupils are confident to challenge stereotypes and champion equality and diversity. In addition, pupils are proud to be involved in making important decisions about the school. For example, the 'student voice' recommended changes to the school lunch menu. Leaders have acted to make these changes.

Those responsible for governance maintain appropriate oversight of the school's statutory duties. They support leaders in their work to promote staff well-being. They also work with leaders to communicate clearly with parents and the local community. This oversight is having a positive impact. Most parents and members of staff express positive opinions about the way the school is led.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make the necessary checks before allowing adults to work at the school. Staff know what to do if they are concerned about a child and they follow procedures to report matters straight away. Leaders then take quick action to put any needed support in place. A dedicated team of staff, 'the pupil and family support team', work with leaders to provide this support. This includes working with families and external agencies when necessary.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' approach to checking what pupils know and remember is not yet fully developed in some subjects. This means they do not accurately check the progress that pupils make through all of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure an approach is in place for staff to check how well pupils know and remember the planned curriculum content in all subjects.
- Leaders approach to recording some behaviour incidents is not precise enough. This limits their ability to track incidents and analyse patterns of behaviour. Leaders should further strengthen their approach to recording and analysing behaviour incidents.

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

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| Unique reference number | 116684 |
| Local authority | Herefordshire |
| Inspection number | 10242303 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 631 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Andy Goode |
| Executive Headteacher | Susan Jenkins |
| Website | http://www.marlbrookschool.com |
| Date of previous inspection | 16 March 2009 |

Information about this school

- The school is part of a federation with two other schools.
- The headteacher left her post in August 2022, to become the chief executive officer of the federation.
- The deputy headteacher became interim executive headteacher in September 2022.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school operates a breakfast and after-school club. This provision is offered free of charge to all pupils.

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 held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer of the federation and members of the governing body.

- The lead inspector had a discussion with a local authority representative.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the leader responsible for safeguarding. He also reviewed safeguarding records and checked the school's single central record.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, science and music. 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 also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, around the school and at lunchtime. They spoke to pupils about their opinions of behaviour at the school.
- Inspectors considered responses on Ofsted's Parents View, including parent free-text responses. They also took account of responses to staff surveys.
- Inspectors visited the before-school provision and spoke to pupils who attend.

Inspection team

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Jonathan Leonard, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Martina Abbott | Ofsted Inspector |
| Sue Parker | Ofsted Inspector |
| Sian Williams | Ofsted Inspector |

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