

Inspection of a good school: Emerson Valley School

Hodder Lane, Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK4 2JR

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 September 2021

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Emerson Valley School are happy and are keen to do well. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well and they want to learn. Pupils do not learn enough in a number of subjects, however.

The school's values of 'community, pride and aspire' underpin all aspects of school life. These values are important to the pupils. Pupils are friendly and welcoming, and they care about one another. Pupils are encouraged to celebrate people's differences and they learn that it is good to be unique.

Pupils know that there is always an adult in school whom they can talk to if they are worried. Well-being scales are used throughout the school day by pupils and adults to check how someone is feeling. Adults use this information to make sure that pupils are given any help and support they may need. Pupils feel safe, supported and listened to. Bullying and unkind behaviour rarely happen, but if they do, leaders deal with it well.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to be successful. Leaders ensure that pupils study the full range of subjects in the national curriculum. Leaders have not, however, planned the curriculum for the foundation subjects effectively enough, except for physical education (PE). Leaders are not clear about what pupils need to learn and in what order in these subjects. Consequently, pupils do not achieve well enough.

Pupils who struggle to read do not catch up quickly. This is because leaders have not planned the phonics curriculum carefully enough. They have not made it clear in which order pupils will learn each sound. Leaders have not given adults the training they need to be able to teach phonics well. Leaders have recently bought new books for pupils to

practise the sounds that they have been taught. These books are not being used effectively because the sequence of learning has not yet been decided.

Mathematics is a strength of the school. Leaders have adopted a scheme of work that carefully sequences the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. Teachers' mathematical subject knowledge is strong. They explain concepts clearly and accurately to pupils. Teachers check what pupils have remembered and then plan lessons to address any gaps in understanding. Consequently, pupils achieve well in mathematics. They explain their understanding with confidence, using appropriate mathematical vocabulary.

The interim executive headteacher and head of school know what needs to be done to improve the curriculum. They have quickly begun to make the necessary improvements. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these changes and there is still much to be done.

Leaders and teachers know pupils well. They use this knowledge to make sure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), get any extra help and support that they need. Staff provide a wide range of resources and adopt a variety of strategies to support pupils with SEND well. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

Pupils come to school with positive attitudes to learning. They work hard in lessons and persevere when faced with a challenge. As a result, lessons are not disrupted.

Leaders enrich the curriculum with a wide range of opportunities and activities. For example, pupils have performed with the Young Voices choir and have represented their school in a variety of sporting competitions. Pupils also enjoy taking on positions of responsibility to help serve the school community. They take these roles seriously. For example, as junior road safety officers, they encourage and promote safe parking at the school to help keep pupils safe.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that the history, art and science curriculum may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture of vigilance. All adults in school make the safety and welfare of children their top priority. Leaders have trained all staff so that they have a thorough understanding of safeguarding. Leaders work closely with external agencies to make sure that pupils and families get the help that they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum and assemblies. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when they are using technology and when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not made it clear enough exactly what pupils are expected to know and be able to do in each foundation subject. This is with the exception of the PE curriculum, which leaders have planned in great detail. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they could in these subjects. Leaders need to ensure that curriculum plans make it clear exactly what content pupils will study and in what order. This is to enable pupils to acquire the knowledge they need to achieve as well as they should across the entire curriculum.
- Leaders have not articulated the order in which the lowest attaining pupils will be taught phonics effectively enough. Furthermore, they have not ensured that all staff teaching phonics have good enough subject knowledge to teach it well. Pupils do not always have books that match the sounds they are learning. Consequently, the lowest attaining pupils are not catching up as quickly as they should. Leaders need to ensure that the sequence in which phonics is taught is carefully planned and that the adults teaching phonics have the skills and knowledge they need to teach phonics well. Leaders also need to ensure that pupils are given books that closely match the sounds they have been taught so that they can practise what they have learned and catch up quickly.

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 good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2016.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	131190
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10200025
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nick Sharp
Headteacher	Hayley White (Executive Headteacher) Iain Mortimer-Fox (Head of School)
Website	www.emersonvalley.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 September 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The interim executive headteacher and head of school were appointed in September 2021.
- The school is federated with Merebrook Infant School.
- The school offers breakfast and after-school club childcare provision.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector also met with representatives from the school's local governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their

learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to pupils read.

- To inspect the school's safeguarding arrangements, the inspector met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and looked at relevant documentation, staff recruitment checks and training records. The inspector also talked to a range of staff and pupils.
- The inspector met with a range of pupils to discuss their views on the school. The inspector spoke to pupils informally during playtime, lunchtime and in lessons.
- The inspector spoke to parents and carers and staff to gather their views. The inspector looked at 73 responses to Parent View, including 41 free-text responses. The inspector also considered 35 responses to the staff survey and 53 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Leah Goulding, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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