

Inspection of a good school: Marden Primary Academy

Marden, Hereford, Herefordshire HR1 3EW

Inspection date:

8 December 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?

Marden Primary School is a very welcoming and friendly place in which to work and learn. Pupils and staff say that they like coming into school each day. Everyone gets on well with one another and pupils' behaviour is super. Bullying is uncommon and pupils are sure that adults would stop it quickly if it happened. Staff are kind to pupils and always have time for them if they are upset or worried about anything.

In class, pupils work hard. They study a broad range of subjects and do lots of interesting things. From dressing up as a Viking, to residential visits to an activity centre, the school provides plenty of memorable experiences. Across the curriculum, some pupils do very well, but some fall behind. This is because some subjects are not planned out carefully enough. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

The school is very community-minded, and pupils do lots of worthwhile things in the local area. They learn how to make a positive contribution to society.

Parents are supportive of the school. They are pleased that their children's school days are so safe and happy.

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

This is a very caring school. Staff are interested in pupils' views and always have time to hear their ideas or respond to any worries. Consequently, pupils feel safe and secure at school and enjoy being there. Whatever they are doing, pupils behave well. They pay attention to their teachers and classrooms are calm and orderly. Indeed, from the early years upwards, classrooms are bright, cheerful places to be. There are plenty of things to see and do. Attention to quality spoken language and treating one another with respect are notable strengths.

Over time, standards vary. In part, this is due to the small numbers in each year group, but it is also because of some shortcomings in the quality of education.

The curriculum is packed full of interesting things and pupils are kept busy. However, while they enjoy what they do in different subjects, some aspects of the curriculum are not well planned. This means pupils do not cover all the things that they should, and some fall behind.

The school's approach to reading, for example is high on enthusiasm but low on structure. Different classes use different resources and to mixed effect. Some pupils can cope with this and zip ahead with their reading. However, some do not. The lack of a systematic phonics programme means that they do not get the right resources to help them. Consequently, some pupils struggle with early reading and fall behind.

In mathematics, whole-school plans are in place, but everyday learning is not managed as well as it could be. Lessons and resources jump about from one thing to another. Often, staff have to find their own resources and sometimes select materials that are not ideal. Pupils are taught mathematics everyday but, like reading, the lack of a systematic approach means that learning is rather ad hoc.

Because plans for what pupils need to know are not well developed, the school's assessments do not necessarily check all the right things. This means staff are not sure what pupils do and do not know. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is also rather hit or miss. Pupils with SEND get caring attention, but their academic support could be better.

Leaders know that there is work to do to improve learning in other subjects too. Staff need clearer guidance about how pupils make progress in different subjects.

That said, there are plenty of existing strengths to build upon. Staff are keen and committed. The school already does many enriching and exciting activities that get pupils interested in different subjects. During this inspection, for example there was a Viking day when pupils and staff dressed up. The school's eco work is well established and pupils' work has been recognised by awards. Links with other schools in the federation support pupils' learning and experiences in sport and performance.

The executive headteacher is well informed. She has established routines to make sure everyone feels valued and supported. She has set out her ambitions for necessary school improvements. Similarly, governors know the key headlines about the school and recognise the need to improve the curriculum's ambition.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that how the school ensures meaningful progression across the curriculum may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders carry out the right checks on adults who work in school. All staff have had recent safeguarding training and know what to do if they spot a concern. Records show that concerns that have arisen have been followed up properly. Staff and governors have a fair knowledge of any local risks. For example, online behaviour outside of school.

The support provided across the federation helps to keep everyone informed about the things they need to know. It also ensures that staff use systems with consistency. Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's approach to early reading is not well structured. This means some pupils fall behind early on. Leaders should ensure that the school adopts a systematic structured phonics programme that is used consistently across early years and key stage 1 and supports weaker readers in key stage 2.
- The school's approach to mathematics relies on too many different resources from different places. This results in staff choosing some materials that are not well matched to pupils' needs. Leaders should review the approach to mathematics to ensure that lessons and resources align with the intentions and ambitions set out in curriculum plans.
- The wider curriculum is full of interesting activities, but current planning is not sufficiently well focused on the subject-specific knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember. Leaders should improve guidance for staff so that they cover all the right things in class and enable pupils to achieve as well as they can.

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 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 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 as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Marden Primary School, to be good on 14 January 2009.

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	140526
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10205171
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mike Williams
Headteacher	Elizabeth Orton (executive headteacher)
Website	marden.hmfa.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 December 2016 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy in January 2014. It is one of eight schools in the Hereford Marches Federation of Academies.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The executive headteacher of the school took up her post in September 2021. She also leads other schools in the federation.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. In these subjects, inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, examined teachers' plans and talked with pupils and staff about the way the subjects are planned and taught. They also looked at some other subjects and spoke with staff and pupils about them.

- The lead inspector looked at 2019 external performance data about the school and examined school documents. These included information about behaviour, school improvement planning, the curriculum and attendance. She also checked the school's website.
- Inspectors asked pupils, staff, leaders and governors about safeguarding arrangements. They examined the record of employment checks on school staff, looked at other school records, and checked safety procedures at the school.
- Inspectors watched pupils' behaviour in class, assembly, at lunchtime, on the playground and at other times during the day.
- During the inspection, inspectors had formal meetings with the executive headteacher, other leaders, staff and governors. Inspectors talked informally with pupils and staff to gather information about school life.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for parents, pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Diane Pye, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Orgill

Ofsted Inspector

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