

Inspection of Mears Ashby Church of England Primary School

North Street, Mears Ashby, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN6 0DW

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2021

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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Mears Ashby is a welcoming school where pupils feel safe and happy. Pupils care for and respect each other. They are polite and friendly to staff and visitors. Leaders know the community well. They encourage pupils to make a difference to the local community. For example, the Reception pupils go on 'welly walks' around the village and older pupils have campaigned for a safe pathway to a local nature area.

Leaders ensure that all pupils are part of school life. They listen and respond to ideas that pupils suggest. For example, older pupils organised 'digital leaders' because they wanted to help younger pupils to improve their knowledge of technology.

Pupils behave well because teachers help them to understand how their words and actions have an impact on others. Teachers help pupils to resolve disagreements quickly. Pupils are confident to talk to an adult if they have worries.

Parents acknowledge how the leaders have established high expectations. One comment which was typical was, 'Learning is inspirational and varied while being delivered with warmth.'

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

Pupils enjoy reading and listening to stories. Teachers use literature to help pupils learn new words. Younger pupils enjoy joining in with familiar stories. Pupils who need additional support to read receive extra help in school. Leaders encourage pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop their understanding of texts.

Leaders have ensured that all staff use the new programme to help pupils at the early stages of learning to read. All teachers have received training in how to use this programme. However, some reading books do not match the sounds that pupils know. Pupils in the early years are not able to use the knowledge of how to sound out words. This is because pupils are not given books early in the reading programme. This slows the rate of how quickly and fluently some pupils learn to read.

The mathematics curriculum is strong. The curriculum plans set out the key knowledge and skills that pupils should learn, from the early years to Year 6. Teachers ensure that key knowledge is broken into small steps. This means that pupils know more and remember more as they progress through the school. Pupils in the early years are provided with rich opportunities to develop their counting and number skills.

The trust has provided school leaders with curriculum plans. In some subjects, these plans help teachers to understand the steps needed to ensure that pupils know and

remember more. Developing the curriculum plans has been delayed due to COVID-19 (coronavirus).

Some curriculum plans have been adapted to meet the needs of pupils in school. However, leaders need to ensure that all curriculum plans are clear and concise, so that pupils' memories are not overloaded. For example, in science and history, leaders have not allowed sufficient time in their current plans for practising key skills and going over important knowledge. They do not enable teachers to understand what pupils must know and remember.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND are included in all aspects of school life. Leaders adapt provision to meet the needs of pupils who need extra support to stay in school. They provide additional support for pupils' mental health. However, some SEND pupils commented on how they are sometimes overloaded with too much information.

Pupils in the early years learn to play with their friends and share equipment. They listen carefully and respond well to routines. Adults help pupils to develop their language by encouraging them to ask questions, explain and reflect. For example, pupils are asked to explain the rules of a skittles game to their friends.

Despite being a small school, leaders strive to provide pupils with a wide variety of lunchtime and after-school provision. Leaders ensure that all pupils take part in extra-curricular activities. They help to nurture pupils' interests and talents. Leaders invite a range of visitors to school to develop pupils' understanding of being a responsible citizen. Leaders also use current affairs to help pupils understand the consequences of behaviour and concepts such as equality and fairness.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have regular training to keep up to date on current guidance for keeping children safe. They understand what to do if they have concerns about a child.

Staff take pupils' safety very seriously. All concerns are logged and monitored carefully. Staff have good partnerships with outside support agencies. Leaders ensure that families get the help and support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that there is a consistent and effective approach to the teaching of early reading and phonics. Books do not match the sounds that pupils have learned. Leaders do not ensure that pupils in the early years are provided with books early in the reading programme. They do not get opportunities to practise sounding out words. Pupils do not quickly develop the knowledge and

skills required to become successful readers. Leaders should ensure that the teaching of early reading and phonics enables all pupils to read quickly, with accuracy and fluency.

- Leaders and staff have written curriculum plans that give details of what pupils in mixed-age classes will learn. However, in some subjects, teachers have not identified which knowledge or concepts are the most important. Plans do not clearly show how knowledge will be revisited regularly over time. Some pupils, including those with SEND, do not remember these concepts or have a deep enough understanding of them. Leaders should identify clearly the most important knowledge and concepts that they want pupils to gain so that they are ready for the next stage of their education.

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	143950
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10200435
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margret Holman
Headteacher	Elizabeth Crofts
Website	www.mearsashby.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Mears Ashby Church of England Primary School joined the Peterborough Diocese Educational Trust in April 2017. When Ofsted inspected the predecessor school in April 2016, it was judged to be inadequate.
- The headteacher started at the school in September 2019. Significant staffing changes have occurred since the school joined the trust. There has also been a restructuring of governance by trust leaders. A number of local governors are new to their roles.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school has 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 school evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, curriculum leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and the early years leader.

- Meetings were held with representatives of the trust and with members of the local governing body.
- Curriculum plans for early reading, mathematics, history, computing, science and art were discussed. The inspection team visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Information on attendance, behaviour logs and safeguarding records were analysed. Meetings with leaders and different staff across the school were held to discuss the safeguarding of pupils.
- Pupil behaviour was considered at different times of day, including breaktime, lunchtime and in the breakfast club.
- Views of parents, pupils and staff shared through the Ofsted surveys and by meeting parents during the inspection were also considered.

Inspection team

Shaheen Hussain, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Shazia Lydon

Ofsted Inspector

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