

Inspection of a good school: Maple Ridge School

Maple Crescent, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 5SX

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 October 2022

Outcome

Maple Ridge School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy busy and interesting days at school. They access rich experiences that bring learning to life. Parents describe the school as 'amazing' because they see their children make such strong progress. Some of the very youngest pupils like coming to school so much that they do not want to leave at the end of the day.

Warm relationships with the adults in school support pupils to feel safe and develop independence. Clear routines enable them to concentrate and behave well. One pupil summed this up by saying teachers are 'nice, but strict', adding that they teach pupils well. Some pupils' behaviour is challenging as a consequence of their needs and anxieties. Staff understand this and provide skilled guidance, so that classroom learning is not disrupted. Sometimes, pupils can be unkind and fall out with each other. Occasionally, they might be hurtful. Leaders are thorough to deal with all of these concerns quickly.

As pupils move through the school, they learn to be part of its community. They become interested in the environment and in each other. They enjoy visits in the locality and beyond. They meet exciting visitors, such as fire fighters. Pupils make friends who add to their enjoyment of learning and play.

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

Pupils achieve well at this school. In particular, they learn to communicate through talk. Parents say this transforms family life. Teaching staff use signs and symbols very well to develop pupils' early interactions. Throughout the school, pupils learn through activities that support communication with others. Pupils make strong progress to self-regulate their emotions and manage moods. They are well equipped to learn across a broader range of subjects as a result of their improving skills in communication and interaction.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is relevant to pupils' needs. Careful sequencing supports small learning steps. Adults provide opportunities for pupils to practise what they know. Teachers and support staff know their pupils really well. The curriculum has recently

been reviewed to meet the needs of a growing number of younger pupils with complex needs. This work is becoming embedded. Teachers' assessments are detailed but, sometimes, they are not helpful enough to identify precise next steps.

Right from children's start in the Reception class, they listen to the sounds that letters make. Before pupils are ready to learn phonics, they hear songs, rhymes and stories. These experiences lead into reading. At home and at school, reading becomes a daily habit. A broad range of experiences enriches pupils' vocabulary. Pupils use well-matched resources, including books. Staff are patient to provide opportunities to repeat learning. This approach improves pupils' memory of initial letter sounds and builds confidence. A small minority of pupils would benefit from more focused teaching input to increase fluency by deepening their knowledge of phonics.

Teachers use varied classroom approaches. They select stimulating resources to engage pupils' interest. Reception children enjoy learning and playing alongside others. For example, during the inspection they were enthusiastic to fill containers with water and then empty them. Sensory approaches continue throughout the school, for example, by supporting key stage 2 pupils to count to 10. Outdoor activities help pupils to develop tolerance of each other, by playing in the wooded area and on the climbing frame. Therapies ensure pupils who need to strengthen their muscular coordination have regular support.

The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils' personal development. Teachers ensure pupils think about others, including people of different cultures and faiths. Small group activities help pupils to learn about emotions. Teachers promote pupils' safe behaviour. An example of this is that when pupils go swimming, staff emphasise the need for privacy when changing. Pupils do not find it easy to memorise lesson content, but they learn important routines. Already, Reception children are used to washing their hands before snack time.

Pupils in Years 5 and 6 develop the resilience to work with a wider group of people. They can attend a daily 'Club Choose' to extend their interests. More important still are the relationships that pupils develop across all three classes. A Year 6 residential during the summer term embeds pupils' increasing independence.

The talented staff team are proud to work at the school. However, some staff told inspectors that, recently, leaders have not helped them to perform their classroom roles as well as they would like. There is some ongoing anxiety about workload. Some staff are unsure how best everyone should work together to manage pupils' needs. Leaders and managers are working with staff, determined to address all concerns.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff and governors are suitably trained to understand their responsibilities for safeguarding. Leaders ensure that everyone's training is kept up to date. Staff know to report any safeguarding concern, however small it might be. If they are unsure, they know to speak to a senior leader. Leaders respond quickly to referrals. They put the child's

safeguarding needs first. Leaders waste no time to access the support that pupils and families need.

The curriculum teaches pupils about staying safe, including when they are online. Parents trust the staff to support their children to feel safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of the school's most-able pupils do not have enough focused teaching input to deepen their phonic knowledge. Pupils are not confident when applying their knowledge of phonics when they meet new words. Leaders need to support staff to implement approaches that will enable pupils to become increasingly fluent readers.
- Recent refinements to the curriculum, and its assessment, are not yet fully embedded. It does not consistently inform pupils' next steps in learning. Leaders need to ensure that assessment supports teachers in ways that are consistently helpful.
- During the inspection, some staff raised concerns about their workloads and how to meet the very complex needs of some pupils. Leaders need to continue building the strength and morale of their staff team.

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 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 October 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.

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	116605
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10200207
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Keith Norman
Headteacher	Vicki Clovis
Website	www.mapleridge.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils with complex needs. These include moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. An increasing number of younger pupils have severe learning difficulties. All pupils placed in the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy and assistant headteachers and other members of staff. The lead inspector spoke with two governors, including the chair of governors. She also had a telephone discussion with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day as well as considering the views expressed by parents and staff via Ofsted's surveys.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, looked at their work and either spoke to pupils about their learning or observed their responses very closely. Inspectors also considered the school's provision in other subject areas, including personal, social and health education.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally in lessons, during breaktimes and around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding records and documents, including the single central record. They also met with the designated leader and reviewed how the school's procedures work.

Inspection team

Linda Jacobs, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Rachel McDonald-Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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