

# Inspection of a good school: Mary Dean's CofE Primary School

Mary Dean Avenue, Tamerton Foliot, Plymouth, Devon PL5 4LS

---

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2022

## **Outcome**

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

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Mary Dean's is a happy, friendly and caring school which pupils enjoy attending. Leaders promote the ethos of a 'school family' where pupils look after each other. For example, older pupils take on roles to help younger pupils at lunchtimes.

Leaders set high expectations for behaviour. There is a calm and orderly feel to the school, both in classrooms and at social times. Pupils are polite and courteous. For example, they listen respectfully to each other's points of view during group activities. Pupils know what bullying is, but say it is rare. They are confident that staff will sort out any incidents or disagreements.

Until recently, there has not been enough urgency to ensure there is a coherent curriculum which clearly details the knowledge that pupils need to learn. Some curriculum thinking is still not complete. As a result, pupils do not learn as much as they could.

Pupils have a variety of opportunities to represent the school, such as the school choir. Sport features highly at Mary Dean's, both through the curriculum and after-school clubs. Pupils are proud of their successes in sporting competitions, such as athletics.

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

Senior leaders are new to their roles. They are ambitious for the school. They have established a sense of shared vision. Staff are proud to work at Mary Dean's. Leaders recognise that curriculum thinking is not as well developed as it should be. Monitoring of the curriculum has not been precise enough. As a result, senior leaders and governors do not have an accurate picture of the implementation and impact of the curriculum. Senior leaders have changed the leadership structure of subjects to ensure better oversight of what pupils learn. Nevertheless, leaders know that some subjects are at the early stages

of implementation of a new curriculum. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these changes.

Leaders prioritise reading from the start. Teachers share a variety of books with pupils regularly. This promotes pupils' love of reading. They recommend books to others. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite books across a range of themes and authors.

Leaders have recently made changes to the teaching of phonics through a more rigorous approach. They have trained all staff in the teaching of phonics. However, leaders have not assured themselves of the effectiveness of this training. Some staff do not have effective subject knowledge. Consequently, pupils who have fallen behind, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not catch up quickly enough. Furthermore, staff do not always match books to the sounds pupils already know. This means pupils struggle to decode words and build up their fluency.

Most teachers explain key concepts clearly across the curriculum. For example, in history, they carefully explain complex issues around life expectancy in Victorian Britain. As a result, pupils have a curiosity for learning. Older pupils recall their learning well.

Teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding. They ensure pupils learn key vocabulary. For example, pupils can explain their thinking when solving more complex problems in mathematics. In the early years, teachers model language well. They establish routines and warm relationships with the children. As a result, children settle quickly into school life.

Staff identify pupils with SEND through clear processes. They work alongside families to meet the needs of these pupils. Leaders check the impact of this support. All pupils receive the same curriculum as their peers.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development through the school's Christian ethos, as well as the curriculum. Assemblies promote the school's six core values of friendship, truthfulness, responsibility, courage, forgiveness and thankfulness. Pupils reflect on these values and recognise their importance. They develop their cultural understanding by celebrating events such as Black History Month.

Leaders have placed an emphasis on pupil leadership. Pupils have opportunities to become school councillors and house captains through elections. This in turn deepens their understanding of democracy.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that the early reading curriculum and checking the implementation and impact of the curriculum may usefully serve as focuses for the next inspection.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide regular safeguarding training for staff. As a result, staff can identify pupils at risk of harm and they know how to raise concerns. Leaders make referrals to the local authority as necessary. Staff know families well.

Pupils know how to keep safe online. They say they feel safe in school and know who they can speak to if they have any concerns.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties for safeguarding. They make regular checks on the school's safeguarding systems, including recruitment checks on staff working with pupils.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Curriculum thinking is not complete in too many subjects. As a result, pupils do not learn as much as they could. Leaders need to ensure that they identify the precise knowledge that pupils need to know and the order they need to know it, in all subjects.
- Some staff do not have sufficient subject knowledge to support pupils and teach early reading well. In addition, pupils do not always read books that precisely match the sounds they know. This means pupils have gaps in their phonics knowledge and do not learn to read quickly enough. Leaders need to provide support and guidance to staff to improve early reading so that all pupils become confident and fluent readers.
- Leaders, including governors, do not review the effectiveness of the curriculum in all subjects precisely enough. Consequently, they do not know how well pupils achieve across the curriculum. Leaders need to develop their knowledge of the implementation and impact of the curriculum so they can help to improve the quality of education pupils receive.

## **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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113418
<b>Local authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	10227167
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	334
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Michael Forster
<b>Headteacher</b>	Donna Wilson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.marydeansprimaryschool.co.uk">www.marydeansprimaryschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher took up her interim role in September 2022. Other members of staff joined the senior leadership team at the same time.
- The school formed a management partnership with First Federation Trust in September 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provisions.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, groups of staff, a representative from the local authority, representatives from First Federation Trust and representatives from the local governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum

with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, looked at samples of work and spoke to pupils about their learning.

- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- The inspector considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding. The inspector also scrutinised the school's single central record.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, the inspector spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- The inspector reviewed key documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and action plans.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and took into consideration responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022