

Inspection of Emerson Valley School

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

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and feel safe at this inclusive school. They learn how to look after their physical and mental well-being. Pupils trust staff to help them sort out any worries or concerns quickly. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Bullying is rare and dealt with appropriately. Pupils take care of each other and form strong friendships. One pupil summed this up by saying, 'If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours.'

Leaders have high expectations and ambition for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff and pupils understand the importance of the school values 'community', 'pride' and 'aspire'. Enrichment beyond the academic curriculum is an important part of leaders' vision. Pupils enjoy the trips, visitors, special events and clubs offered. They embrace leadership roles and responsibilities with enthusiasm because what they do makes a difference to the school and local area.

Pupils are keen to learn, not giving up when they find work tricky. They are benefiting from the improved curriculum leaders have put in place. On the whole, pupils achieve well, talking enthusiastically about their learning. Where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge, leaders are working quickly to address these.

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

Since the last inspection, leaders have developed a well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum. This has been further strengthened by subject leaders working closely with feeder infant schools and colleagues from the secondary phase. Leaders ensure that curriculum plans support pupils to secure important knowledge and vocabulary. They have provided effective training so that staff are confident to teach lessons where pupils can learn and do more. The curriculum is equally ambitious for pupils with SEND. Leaders support teachers to provide carefully adapted lessons that allow all pupils to access the intended learning at an age-appropriate level.

Leaders promote a love of reading across the school. Well-stocked book areas and the school library contain a range of books which celebrate diversity. Teachers read to their class carefully considered texts in an exciting and engaging way. The help pupils receive to develop their reading comprehension skills is a strength. However, the support provided for pupils who struggle to learn to read is not yet fully embedded. Leaders have selected a robust early reading programme, but not all staff have completed the training to follow it rigorously.

Staff implement the school's behaviour policy consistently and fairly. This ensures that school is calm and orderly. Pupils who find it hard to make the right behaviour choices get the help that they need to succeed. Social times are positive, and pupils enjoy their time together. They make good use of the extensive school grounds, fitness trails and play equipment available. Occasionally, pupils' behaviour can slip if they think no one is watching. Leaders are aware of the improvements needed in

this area and are ambitious in their vision for pupils giving their very best at all times.

Leaders provide pupils with varied and interesting opportunities for personal development. The personal, social, health and economic education is well sequenced and gets pupils ready for their move to secondary school. Pupils learn how to stay safe in their local community, as well as when online. They have an understanding of democracy and show respect for other people's points of view. Pupils are kind and think about others, organising several fund-raising events. They value the extensive range of leadership posts they can apply for and the impact they have on the school and the local community. Leaders are aware of the need to widen the range of non-sports-based clubs and plans are in place to do so. They are passionate about making sure every pupil has access to the visits, visitors, clubs and events that are available.

Governors have helped to secure positive change since the last inspection. They know the school's strengths well and show commitment to further improvement. Governors have become more robust in holding school leaders to account and increased their focus on the strategic leadership of the quality of education provided. The appointment of the new head of school has strengthened senior leadership. Working alongside the executive headteacher, they are helping middle leaders who require further development. Staff are supportive of senior leaders. They feel respected and appreciate the consideration leaders place on well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders and staff get to know their pupils and families very well. Staff are alert and recognise the potential signs of harm to pupils. They report their concerns promptly and record these accurately. When needed, leaders refer any concerns to external safeguarding partners. They actively pursue these referrals to ensure that pupils and families get prompt support. Leaders ensure that staff and governors receive up-to-date training. This includes any specific safeguarding issues that have arisen in the local area. Minor weaknesses in safeguarding identified during the inspection were swiftly resolved by leaders.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all pupils who are struggling to learn to read are catching up as quickly as they could. This group of pupils require adaptations and additional support when accessing learning. Leaders have correctly identified the next steps for

improvement. They must ensure that all staff know how to support this group of pupils as they learn to read and follow the school's agreed process.

- In some of the foundation subjects, teachers do not know what pupils have learned at the end of each unit of work. This means that teachers do not make sure pupils have secured important knowledge before they learn something new. Leaders for every subject should ensure that all staff have the knowledge to check what pupils know and that they are ready to move on with their learning.
- Aspects of leadership and management are not well embedded. This means that some groups of pupils, including the most disadvantaged, are not always achieving the high ambitions of senior leaders. Middle leaders should be supported to think more strategically about their areas of responsibility and consider the way these link to whole school improvement targets.

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	131190
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10240254
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	445
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nick Sharp
Headteacher	Hayley White (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.emersonvalley.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 September 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The head of school started in September 2022.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school care club for pupils who attend the school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with two governors, including the chair of governors. He also held a separate meeting with a representative from Milton Keynes local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, computing and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors

discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. The lead inspector also heard pupils read.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of recruitment checks. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors took account of parents' responses to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' written comments. An inspector also spoke to groups of parents on the morning of the first day of inspection.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views throughout the day, including during lesson visits and at breaktimes. They also took into account responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff to gather their views about the school and took account of staff's responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Alan Derry, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Fiona Henderson	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Woodbridge	His Majesty's Inspector

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