

Inspection of Mendlesham Primary School

Old Station Road, Mendlesham, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5RT

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 November 2024

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The co-executive principals of this school are Tessa Sait and Sarah King. This school is part of Oxlip Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Shaun Common, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Bob Wade. The co-executive principals are responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending school. They are very enthusiastic about what they have learned and the different ways that learning is brought to life. For example, pupils had made circuits out of various materials and could describe the science behind this. Pupils love reading, choosing from the wide and varied selection of books on offer.

The school is highly ambitious for what pupils can achieve. Most make good progress through the curriculum as a result. The school keeps a close eye on what each cohort learns over time, so that everyone has the same wide experiences and knowledge. The school is highly inclusive. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend 'Mulberry', the special education needs (SEN) unit, are fully part of the school. Pupils are polite, welcoming and well behaved.

Pupils in the older years take their responsibilities seriously, for example as road safety officers. They take pride in helping the youngest children go to and from playtimes. Those youngest children quickly develop strong understanding of school routines and expectations. They are independent, organising themselves and their belongings at the start and end of each day.

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

The school regularly reviews the curriculum. Professional development helps teachers become experts in what they are teaching. Pupils are enthused by their learning. They can recall lots of what they have learned before. The school helps pupils revise and rehearse previous learning in many ways, for example 'fast facts' in mathematics, and 'sticky knowledge quizzes'. Pupils make good progress in their learning over their time in the school. This includes pupils with SEND.

Reading is given high importance. Pupils read books that are well matched to their reading stage. They regularly practise reading both for phonics knowledge and to develop comprehension. Close monitoring of those pupils at the earliest stages of reading, means that everyone who needs it gets help to catch up or keep up. As pupils become more fluent readers, they read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts.

Teachers use practical apparatus and other resources, such as word banks, to help pupils where needed. Pupils with SEND have well thought through adaptations or additional help to enable them to make strong progress through the curriculum. Their needs are clearly identified and met. Skilled staff ensure that pupils in the SEN unit successfully access a similar, broad curriculum to their peers.

The curriculum is enhanced by a range of clubs and visits. The school ensures that all pupils get core experiences, such as a theatre trip and learning to play a musical instrument, from the early years onwards.

Pupils are enthusiastic to write. However, the quality of their handwriting varies. The oldest pupils generally have neat and well-formed writing. Some younger pupils have

poorly formed letters, which means they are not able to write fluently and at speed. The school has now ensured pupils practise writing on paper frequently right from the start. There is a high focus on children in the early years developing strong finger grip. There is time for other pupils to practise key writing skills. However, this work is at an early stage.

Pupils learn about core values, such as respect and difference. They show these in their behaviour, being friendly and kind to each other. They are welcoming to newcomers to the school. Pupils of all ages play together at breaktimes and enjoy using the climbing and fitness equipment. Pupils try hard in their lessons. They listen carefully to guidance from staff on how to improve their work.

Pupils are knowledgeable about local artists and famous people. The school has reviewed and enhanced books available and the art and design curriculum, so there is a greater diversity of cultures represented. However, pupils do not yet know much about life in modern Britain beyond Suffolk. They do not know how people can create change beyond their local community, for example overcoming discrimination.

Leaders work together closely and are knowledgeable about what the school needs to do to continue to improve. Staff feel well supported by leaders at all levels and in the wider trust. The local advisory body has ensured that its recently changed role is still effective and challenging to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils have not been taught precise transcription skills as well as they could have. As a result, their letter formation is not fluent and slows the writing process. The school should ensure that pupils develop the transcription skills required to write fluently.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to learn about life and values beyond their local area. For example, they do not learn widely about the role of government or about important people in recent history beyond Suffolk. The school needs to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain beyond the local area.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143361
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10373934
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	118
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Bob Wade
CEO of the trust	Shaun Common
Principal	Tessa Sait (Executive principal), Sarah King (Co-executive principal)
Website	www.mendlesham.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school works closely with another local school. The schools share a senior leadership team. Subject leaders work across both schools.
- The school has an SEN unit for up to 18 pupils in key stage 2 with a primary need of cognition and learning. Pupils are all placed by the local authority. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school was previously part of the John Milton Multi Academy Trust. This merged with Gippeswyck Community Educational Trust on 1 September 2024 to become Oxlip Learning Partnership.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher, senior leaders and other subject leaders. They met with the CEO, the chair of the trust and members of the local advisory body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, music and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tracy Warner

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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