

The Mill Primary Academy

Address: Ifield Drive, Ifield, Crawley, West Sussex, RH11 0EL

Unique reference number (URN): 139958

Inspection report: 21 April 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Many pupils achieve well here. At the end of key stage 2, attainment at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is high, including for disadvantaged pupils. Progress is broadly in line with national averages. Outcomes in English grammar, punctuation and spelling are weaker, and the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in end of year tests is average. Achievement across the wider curriculum is secure but does not consistently reflect the strength of published outcomes.

The school's approach to writing is well embedded and supports pupils to use ambitious language and explain their ideas. Handwriting and overall presentation vary between classes, but writing is secure overall, with stronger outcomes in Year 6. Phonics provision is consistent and effective, helping pupils to become fluent and confident readers. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make effective progress when support is planned and implemented effectively.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils attend well. Leaders and staff promote attendance effectively through very good pastoral support and clear communication with families. As a result, most pupils attend regularly and arrive at school calm, happy and ready to learn. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities needs attend in line with their peers. Leaders monitor attendance closely and take appropriate action to address absence where needed. This ensures that pupils do not miss significant learning. Pupils enjoy school and value the opportunities it provides, including forest school, physical education and social times. Leaders' work to support positive attendance ensures that pupils engage consistently in learning and make expected progress.

Pupils behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They are polite, confident and respectful towards adults and visitors. In lessons, most pupils focus on their work and contribute positively, although a small minority occasionally lose focus. Social times are safe and joyful. Pupils play cooperatively and interact well with one another. Behaviour in the dining hall is orderly, and pupils demonstrate positive social skills. Leaders manage serious behaviour appropriately. While suspensions remain high, records show that leaders use them as a last resort and follow clear procedures, including effective reintegration.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. The school's approach to writing is embedded and supports pupils to use ambitious vocabulary and explain their ideas clearly. Phonics provision is effective and enables pupils to develop secure early reading skills. Leaders prioritise reading appropriately, including through daily whole-school reading, which most pupils engage with positively.

Across subjects, teaching is generally high quality, although some inconsistency remains. In mathematics, pupils in some classes demonstrate secure understanding and explain their

reasoning confidently. In other classes, some pupils show gaps in prior knowledge and do not consistently use available scaffolds to support their learning.

Teachers provide feedback that supports learning, including verbal guidance, although this is not consistently applied. At times, staff do not address errors in spelling, grammar and handwriting closely enough, which leads to some pupils repeating mistakes. By Year 6, however, pupils in Year 6 produce impressive written work, inspired by model texts that support their composition. Overall, expectations are typically appropriate, and pupils engage well in their learning, but greater consistency in feedback and task design is needed. Currently, when pupils misunderstand content, they do not always receive the help they need to succeed across all areas of their learning.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that provision in the early years is welcoming, happy and effective. Staff establish positive relationships, embed clear routines and create a language-rich environment that supports children's development well. Leaders identify training needs accurately and provide targeted support for staff, including those new to the role. This helps to improve consistency in practice across the team.

Leaders have designed a broad curriculum that offers a wide range of experiences across all areas of learning. The curriculum promotes early communication, language and independence skills. However, staff do not consistently deepen children's learning, particularly in writing and early mathematics. As a result, opportunities to extend and embed knowledge are sometimes missed during activities.

Teaching is generally effective. Adults mostly follow children's interests and engage them purposefully in play-based learning. In stronger instances, skilled interactions extend children's thinking well. Staff do not always capitalise on opportunities within activities and routines to build on children's ideas or sustain learning over time.

Leaders promote children's wellbeing and welfare effectively. Children are happy, settle quickly into routines and behave cooperatively. Daily routines support children's growing independence and emotional security. Inclusive practice requires further development. While most children access the full range of provision, some children with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not consistently receive well-adapted activities to participate fully alongside their peers.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders provide a suitable strategic approach to personal development and wellbeing. They prioritise pastoral care and ensure that most pupils feel supported and included. The personal development programme is coherent and meets statutory requirements. Pastoral support is a strength. Staff, including the family liaison officer, provide effective support for pupils and families, particularly those with additional needs. This contributes to pupils feeling safe, settled and ready to learn. Additional provision, such as after-school and holiday clubs, further supports pupils' wellbeing and engagement. This caring school ensures that pupils develop a sense of belonging as part of a warm and welcoming community. Pupils enjoy the

enriching collaboration of outdoor learning opportunities, which the school strives to link to curriculum knowledge.

The personal, social, health and economic curriculum is appropriate and supports pupils to understand healthy relationships, personal safety and risks, including those linked to online activity. Pupils learn about social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues and demonstrate respectful attitudes towards others. However, pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is less secure. Some pupils can recall key concepts, but others show only a superficial understanding.

Leaders offer a broad range of experiences to enrich pupils' development. This wide offer helps to nurture the unique talents and interests of individual pupils. Clubs, trips, sport and music experiences support pupils' confidence, creativity and teamwork. Participation, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is improving over time, although it is not yet consistently high for all groups. Leaders track engagement and take appropriate steps to increase inclusion.

Pupil leadership roles, such as wellbeing ambassador, eco councillor, head boy and head girl inspire pupils to take responsibility and make a tangible difference to school life. Pupils become impressive role models to others as they develop maturity, resilience and higher aspirations for the future.

Needs attention

Inclusion

Needs attention 

The school's work to assess and meet the needs of pupils needs attention. Leaders do not always ensure a consistent or accurate approach to identifying needs or reducing barriers to learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is variable. Some staff adapt learning effectively, but others do not adjust tasks to help all pupils access learning in their classrooms. As a result, pupils experience inconsistent support and sometimes do not access the same opportunities as their peers. Oversight from leaders lacks precision, and systems for mapping and reviewing provision lack clarity. Leaders rely too heavily on the individual expertise of staff. While teaching and learning from early years to Year 6 is generally high quality, too many pupils spend extended periods away from their peers, limiting opportunities to develop their communication and social skills.

Disadvantaged pupils benefit from an evidence-informed pupil premium strategy. However, variability in classroom practice limits its impact on reducing barriers to learning. Leaders ensure that pupils known to social care and those facing additional barriers are generally well supported. While many pupils receive effective help, this is not always systematic. Leaders, governors and trustees lack strong oversight to ensure that staff provide consistently effective support to help pupils overcome barriers.

Leaders do not exercise accurate oversight across all areas of the school. Leaders' monitoring of inclusion lacks rigour. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is high quality in some classes, but inconsistent oversight of the effectiveness of support overall means that some pupils do not access the same opportunities as their peers. As a result, some pupils with SEND are not achieving as well as they could within their classrooms. The school has more work to do to ensure that effective adaptations include pupils in learning experiences more successfully alongside other pupils in their classes.

Governors support the school well and are actively involved in the community, but they sometimes rely on leaders' assertions and performance data to inform their support and challenge to the school. Trustees ensure that statutory duties are met, but their knowledge of the school lacks precision at times. Leaders, governors and trustees had not identified the weaker areas of the school's work.

Other aspects of leadership are effective. Leaders use the pupil premium grant appropriately. They strive to make decisions with pupils' best interests at heart. Leaders ensure high-quality pastoral care and personal development opportunities. Pupils achieve well and published outcomes reflect consistent success over time in statutory tests. Leaders, governors and trustees model compassion and dedication to others, leading to a positive and aspirational school environment. Staff feel highly supported and report no concerns about workload or wellbeing. Leaders provide suitable continuing professional development, including for early career teachers. Many parents and carers speak highly of the caring ethos of the school and recommend it to others.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils give a joyful welcome to this friendly and caring school. Playtimes buzz with activity, and relationships across the community are warm and supportive. Pupils respond well to leaders' high expectations. They behave politely, hold doors for visitors and move purposefully around the school. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, and lessons proceed without disruption. Pupils say that bullying is rare. Staff address any concerns swiftly and effectively.

The school vision for everyone to be 'forever proud' is modelled daily by caring leaders and staff. Pupils feel a sense of belonging from the day they join the nurturing environment in early years. As they move through the school, pupils take on leadership roles which develop their confidence and resilience further. The school provides a range of effective opportunities to support pupils' personal development. Initiatives such as 'Room 13' enable pupils to work with a resident artist and produce high-quality work for display in the local community. Pupils develop a clear understanding of equality and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders and staff promote good attendance through effective pastoral support for families.

Pupils generally achieve well across the curriculum. By the end of Year 6, many produce high-quality work and attain highly in reading, writing and mathematics. This prepares them

very well for the next stage of education. Leaders, governors and trustees maintain generally effective provision across the school. They ensure suitable use of pupil premium to help disadvantaged pupils to access opportunities that enhance their wellbeing and conquer barriers. However, leaders' oversight of inclusion lacks precision. As a result, provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is inconsistent. Staff do not always adapt activities to ensure that pupils with SEND access the same opportunities as their peers.

Next steps

- Leaders, governors and trustees must strengthen their oversight of the schools' work to ensure that accurate evaluations identify weaknesses accurately to drive effective improvement.
 - Leaders must identify and support the needs of pupils accurately to ensure that provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is consistently effective.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers design and adapt lesson tasks that help pupils to achieve well across all areas of learning.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers identify and address pupils' misconceptions to help them to improve their work successfully.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff promote early writing and mathematics more effectively for all children across early years provision.
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About this inspection

This school is part of The Kemnal Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Russell Hobby, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Catherine McGuinness.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, SENDCo, teachers, support staff, trust leaders, governors, pupils, parents and carers during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently does not use any alternative provision.

There have been no relevant changes since the previous inspection.

Lead inspector:

Scott Reece, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Luisa Gould, Ofsted Inspector

Catherine Cottingham, Ofsted Inspector

Natalie Broad, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

545

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

630

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

20.73%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.02%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.84%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	76%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	83%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	67%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	80%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	86%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	71%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	87%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	85%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	88%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	88%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	65%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	63%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	75%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	62%	44%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	75%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	65%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	81%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	83%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	58%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	76%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	75%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	83%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	73%	59%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	65%	68%	-3 pp
2024/25 (revised)	63%	69%	-7 pp
2023/24 (final)	75%	67%	8 pp
2022/23 (final)	62%	66%	-5 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	74%	80%	-5 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	81%	3 pp
2023/24 (final)	75%	80%	-5 pp
2022/23 (final)	65%	78%	-13 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	81%	78%	3 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	78%	5 pp
2023/24 (final)	83%	78%	6 pp
2022/23 (final)	77%	77%	0 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	76%	80%	-4 pp
2024/25 (revised)	75%	81%	-6 pp
2023/24 (final)	83%	79%	4 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	73%	79%	-6 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	4.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	13.5%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	11.7%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	16.0%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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