

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Mill Mead Primary School

Mill Mead Primary School Port Vale, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG14 3AA

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 June 2025

Outcome

Mill Mead Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Mill Mead are proud of their school and their learning. They enjoy being at school. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They understand the school's values of being 'honest, respectful, resilient, kind, brave, responsible and reflective'. They use these values to guide their learning and relationships with each other and staff. This creates a happy and safe place to learn.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievements. Pupils love sharing their knowledge across subjects and trying hard. They achieve well. The curriculum captures pupils' interests. Pupils learn to use and apply what they know across different subjects. They value the support and guidance from staff to improve their work. Pupils know that an adult is always available to help when needed. They learn to solve problems independently.

Pupils speak eloquently and engage in meaningful discussions. They listen to and respect the opinions of others. The school parliament makes decisions to enhance the school. Older pupils have many chances to contribute as 'team captains', 'buddies' and 'ambassadors'.

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

The curriculum is ambitious. In many subjects, recurring themes allow pupils to revisit essential knowledge regularly. This helps them to build strong foundations for future learning and so they achieve well. The curriculum is well structured across year groups in these subjects. The careful planning of what to teach and when helps staff to adjust their teaching to meet pupils' needs. However, this is not as evident in a few subjects. These subjects contain a substantial amount of content. In these subjects, the school has not identified clearly the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn and when this should

be taught. Pupils lack opportunities to revisit important knowledge, which limits how well they achieve over time in these subjects.

Staff check what pupils know and understand. These checks help them identify pupils who fall behind or need additional support. Staff use this information to make appropriate adjustments to close gaps in pupils' knowledge. For instance, the school has improved opportunities for pupils to develop their fluency in mathematics. The school seeks professional advice and guidance to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the support they need to access the curriculum successfully.

Children in the early years get off to a great start. Skilled staff model language and support children to ask for help and communicate their needs. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed to establish strong learning habits. Teachers encourage children to try new things. They help them to explore the learning environment and solve problems for themselves.

Teachers teach phonics with consistency. Almost all pupils are able to use their phonics knowledge to read fluently and understand what they read by the end of Year 1. Those who cannot do this receive ongoing and targeted support. This helps these pupils to become more fluent readers. Staff receive training to deliver the reading curriculum effectively. Teachers address gaps swiftly, ensuring that pupils keep pace with the reading programme and grow in confidence. Older pupils read widely and enjoy using new vocabulary in their writing.

Pupils represent their school well. They wear their uniform proudly and are eager to discuss their learning. They celebrate diversity and behave responsibly, understanding the impact of their actions. Pupils question and challenge inequality when they encounter it. One pupil summarised the views of many when they said, 'This is a school where you are not told what to believe. Here, we respect each other.'

The school recognises that pupils learn best when they feel happy, safe and secure. Pupils develop an understanding of how to maintain their mental and physical health. They learn about consent and how to navigate changes from childhood to adolescence and adulthood. A wide range of clubs encourage pupils to develop their interests. Pupils in Year 3 to Year 6 can learn musical instruments such as brass instruments, drums and piano. Trips, such as a trip to an observatory, enrich the curriculum.

Changes have strengthened pupils' achievement. The school considers staff well-being and workload. Staff appreciate the support and resources available to teach the curriculum well. Pupils and staff are positive about the school's progress and enjoy learning and working together. Most parents and carers support the changes and decisions made by the school, but a few do not. This is because the school does not communicate its actions and reasons for change as effectively as it could to some parents.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, there is too much content. The school has not clearly identified the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn and when. As a result, pupils sometimes move on before they have fully understood or remembered important learning, which limits their achievement over time. The school needs to define and sequence key knowledge more precisely in these subjects so that pupils can build their understanding securely.
- The school does not communicate as well as it could with some parents. As a result, a few parents lack confidence in the school's actions, policies and procedures. The school should ensure that all parents are fully informed so that they are aware of the school's work and the rationale for its actions.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in April 2014.

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	117297
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10294974
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alistair Ayres
Headteacher	Rachael Walsh
Website	www.millmead.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has extended its early provision to include three-year-old children.
- Governors have agreed to join the Laurel Education Trust.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator, other school leaders and the chair of governors.

- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at social times.
- The inspector considered the responses and free-text responses submitted by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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

Oriana Dalton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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