

# Emerson Valley School

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

## Inspection dates

14–15 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' work to find strengths and weaknesses. This information is then used well to plan lessons, which strengthens pupils' understanding.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress. This is because the school's revised assessment methods allow staff to analyse needs and identify the right support for pupils.
- Leaders have developed a consistent approach to teaching across the school, which means that outcomes for all groups of children have improved significantly.
- The curriculum engages pupils because it is broad, balanced and interesting. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to participate in arts, science and sports activities, which bring learning to life and develop new skills and aspirations.
- Most parents are very positive about the changes implemented by the current leadership team and support leaders in continuing to improve the school.
- Leaders have successfully identified areas for improvement and are addressing these effectively.
- The headteacher is absolutely committed to making Emerson Valley an outstanding school. Along with her committed, talented and enthusiastic senior leaders, she works tirelessly to provide the best education and care for every pupil.
- Governors are actively involved in school life and know the school well. They keep themselves informed about pupils' progress and hold leaders to account for the standards achieved.
- Pupils work and play together regardless of age, gender or ethnic heritage. Pupils feel safe and welcomed in this happy school. Pupils behave well in class and around school.

## **Full report**

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

- Strengthen the role of subject leaders so that they bring about further improvements to pupils' progress particularly in Years 3 and 4.
- Ensure that all pupils are taught the skills to help them to develop into confident writers who are able to write for different purposes.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher provides ambitious leadership. Staff morale is high. Parents have confidence in senior staff. One parent said, 'The school is making great progress under the current headteacher. We are looking forward to the new school year and have every confidence in the school.'
- The senior staff are a very effective team, which has taken determined action to improve the school. Weak teaching has been eradicated and pupils' progress and attitudes to learning have improved. Progress made by the senior team indicates very strongly that they are able to improve the school further. They know exactly what needs to be done next and staff share their motivation and ambition to achieve it.
- In light of past underachievement of pupils and many staff changes, senior staff have reviewed the curriculum with a particular focus on mathematics, reading and writing. These changes are already resulting in consistently better teaching, particularly in mathematics.
- There is an extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. Pupils can learn to ski and go snowboarding as well as enjoying singing in a choir and competing in team games. All pupils are invited to participate. Those who do talk excitedly about how they learn new skills and face new challenges.
- Any additional government funds are directed carefully to support pupils to promote their full engagement in learning and improve their outcomes. Governors review the impact of the spending at governing body meetings and report annually on the school's website.
- The school provides good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are keen to learn about the world around them and followed the journey of the astronaut, Sir Tim Peake, with great enthusiasm. This extended their knowledge, skills and love of science, and gave a clear message about working hard to achieve something extraordinary.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well through its values education, celebrating different languages and faiths and teaching British values to all pupils. In lessons and around the school pupils show great respect and care for one another, enjoying learning about each other's cultures and experiences.
- Newly qualified teachers receive a high standard of support and guidance. They are challenged to ensure that they continue to improve their practice and maintain high expectations of their pupils.
- Senior leaders make themselves available to meet parents and carers before and after school on a daily basis. This has been a deliberate step to improve communication and is appreciated by parents and carers.

- The impact of senior leaders' decisions and actions can be seen in improved rates of progress and better outcomes for pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Senior leaders work closely with subject leaders to develop how they challenge and support other staff, including teaching assistants, to help them to be sharper when making judgements about the progress pupils make. Improving rates of progress in mathematics are highly evident, but further work is required to ensure that similar outcomes are achieved when writing across the curriculum.

### **Governance**

- Since the last inspection governors have worked with four different headteachers and have found it very difficult to appoint someone to the substantive post. Successful appointments of senior staff mean that governors are now working effectively with leaders and share in the school's vision and ambition. Governors manage the headteacher's performance rigorously and governors understand how the school rewards good performance of other staff.
- Governors provide good support and challenge to leaders and most recently, have worked more closely with the senior team to understand assessment and pupils' progress. This has ensured that they ask pertinent questions about how well pupils are doing and are able to challenge underachievement of groups of pupils. Governors monitor closely the impact of any additional funds to ensure that funding makes the greatest difference to pupils.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils and staff are well supported by dedicated learning mentors who ensure that agreed systems are consistently maintained. Any non-attendance is quickly followed up and pupils and their families have time and space to talk.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Good teaching across the school ensures that pupils including the disadvantaged, those who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress.
- Teachers ensure that lessons are engaging and challenging so pupils enjoy their learning and want to succeed. For example, in a reading session pupils had access to a laptop quiz, which helped to assess their understanding of the story. Pupils talk with knowledge and understanding about what they have read and are keen to move on to a new text.
- Good teaching in mathematics ensures that pupils make at least good progress. They are secure in their understanding of number facts and put them to good use in real-life situations. Younger pupils show enthusiasm for mathematics. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils were really keen to extend their learning and enjoy the different challenges set by the teacher, moving on to create their own, using four-digit numbers.
- Some pupils join the school without a secure knowledge of phonics. In reading, the majority of pupils make good progress because they are supported by good teaching and appropriate resources.

- In writing across the curriculum, there is a lack of challenge for pupils. Some most-able pupils do not get sufficient time to develop their writing and do not typically use the skills they have been taught when writing in other curriculum subjects. This means that the progress they make is not as fast as it might be.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe in school and their parents agree that the school is attentive to their children's welfare.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe in a wide range of situations, including when online.
- Pupils have positive and inquisitive attitudes towards differences and enjoy the open and respectful culture that the school offers. For example, one Year 5 class translates motivational statements into Polish and the school promotes each one of the different spoken languages in turn.
- Pupils talk articulately about how they stay fit and healthy and the school supports them well in doing this by promoting healthy eating and placing an emphasis on the importance of physical education. Specialist staff are absolutely committed to getting every pupil involved in some type of activity and work hard with external providers to make the choice of activities exciting and relevant. However, too few disadvantaged pupils take part in extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils are fully aware of all types of bullying and discrimination. They say that any form of bullying or discrimination is rare and the school deals with any occasional issues efficiently and effectively.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Adults deal with occasional incidents of poor behaviour effectively using the school's behaviour management system. Lunchtimes and playtimes run very smoothly and the pupils enjoy the outdoor space together using the asphalt area for team games and the field for creative play.
- Pupils like the way the school monitors their behaviour. It is important to them not to have to put their name on 'the cloud' that is the school's way of letting pupils know that poor behaviour is unacceptable. Adults intervene effectively to help pupils to think about what they did and about how to put it right.
- Pupils feel that staff support them well and relationships across the school are very strong. Typically, pupils say that 'teachers are really kind'.
- Pupils are keen to learn and are proud of their school and what they achieve.
- Learning mentors have developed good systems to support pupils and families with specific needs. They also monitor attendance effectively and if a pupil is not in school, they follow up their absence swiftly. Pupils' attendance is good and they are punctual for lessons. There have been no exclusions. The breakfast club offers a healthy breakfast choice and runs activities both inside and outdoors. These opportunities support pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices and have a prompt start to the day.

## Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders have worked extremely effectively to challenge the previous culture of underachievement and the most recent end of key stage results have shown improvement. The school has changed the way teachers assess pupils' progress. This has meant that staff are making sure that they teach what pupils need to know to improve more quickly.
- The school's information shows that the progress made by pupils across all year groups is accelerating, with the majority of pupils making good progress in reading and mathematics.
- Where pupils are challenged in lessons, the most able are making better progress than in the past. This is because learning activities challenge pupils appropriately.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are currently making good progress.
- Year 6 pupils in 2016 achieved significantly above the expected standards achieved by all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics combined.
- The difference between the standards reached by disadvantaged pupils and others nationally is diminishing quickly. By the end of key stage 2 the standards met by disadvantaged pupils in reading and mathematics in 2016 were above those achieved by other pupils nationally and were in line for writing.
- Pupils read widely and often and talk articulately about what they have read. Years 5 and 6 pupils read with great expression. Leaders are currently reviewing the teaching of phonics to ensure that it is helping younger pupils to read more confidently. Most pupils are sounding out any unknown words to help them to get a better understanding of a text and read more fluently.
- When writing, pupils' work is organised well and makes good use of a range of vocabulary and writing styles. In key stage 2, pupils' ability to write at length has significantly improved since the last inspection. However, pupils have made slower progress in writing in other subjects, particularly the most-able pupils in Years 3 and 4.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education and are on track to have the academic and personal skills required to enjoy secondary school.

## School details

Unique reference number	131190
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10012314

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	432
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne Smith
Headteacher	Sohelia Mathison
Telephone number	01908 507 914
Website	<a href="http://www.emersonvalley.org.uk">www.emersonvalley.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@emersonvalley.org.uk">office@emersonvalley.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	2 July 2014

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. Emerson Valley School has had significant staff changes over the last two years. More than half of the staff changed in each of the academic years. Just over a year ago, the new headteacher and assistant headteacher were employed by the school. They were joined in January 2016 by a second newly appointed assistant headteacher.
- Emerson Valley is a much larger than average-sized junior school.
- Just over half the pupils have White British heritage. Other pupils come from a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds and 26 different languages are spoken in school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly in line with other schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support through the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A breakfast club is provided by the school for all pupils. The wide variety of after-school activities are offered by staff and outside organisations.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes and in a range of subjects.
- An inspector attended assembly.
- An inspector attended breakfast club.
- Inspectors looked at the school's website. Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at work in pupils' books alongside subject leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, the physical education coordinator, newly qualified teachers, office staff and learning mentors. An inspector met with three members of the governing body including the chair. A meeting was also held with the local authority adviser.
- A group of pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with an inspector. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils around the school.
- The inspectors took account of 33 staff questionnaires. Sixty responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were also considered along with 35 written comments. Inspectors had discussions with 25 parents before and after school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation including information on pupils' outcomes, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Sarah Varnom, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Marshall	Ofsted Inspector

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