

Inspection of Marie Weller Primary School

Redcar Road, Towcester NN12 6LZ

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive principal of this school is Andrea Curtis. The school is part of The Hawksmoor Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, who is also Andrea Curtis, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Karen Falvey.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school has rapidly established itself at the heart of the new community it serves. Parents and carers are full of praise for how well staff know and support their children. Typically, parents say the school's 'safe, fun and nurturing environment' means that each pupil is cared for as an individual. One parent describes how their child is 'buzzing to tell me what they have learned each day', while another simply states that their child 'loves school'.

Pupils are keen to come to school and want to learn. They enjoy playing with their friends and get on well with staff. Most pupils behave well. They use 'kind hands' to avoid causing upsets. They understand why the three 'golden rules' matter. A few pupils benefit from close support to meet these expectations. Pupils enjoy gaining rewards for doing the right thing. Incentives such as the headteacher's awards and 'notes home' are highly valued.

Pupils enjoy trips to the theatre and a local farm, competing in sports events and celebrating harvest. They liked learning about different faiths and cultures from members of the school community. After-school clubs are also very popular. Whether pupils want to bake, practise the recorder or do yoga, there is something for everyone.

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

The school has worked hard to design a suitable curriculum. Significant support from the trust has helped with this process. The curriculum is well thought out. Each subject sets out the precise information pupils need to know in a logical order. While the school currently only admits pupils up to Year 2, subjects have been planned from the early years to Year 6. This means staff can make connections between what pupils already know and their future learning.

Strategies used to teach new subject content are usually appropriate. Staff ask suitable questions to help deepen pupils' understanding. They check that pupils can remember important information. However, teachers sometimes focus too much on what they want pupils to do rather than what pupils need to know. On these occasions, the planned activities distract pupils from learning the key knowledge.

Teachers usually adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. Occasionally, some pupils find the work too tricky, while others complete it and are ready to move on. Teachers do not always spot when this happens and make suitable modifications. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in the process of being reviewed to make sure that these pupils get all the help they need.

Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' written work vary. They do not always check the accuracy of what pupils write closely. Pupils' written pieces are not always of a high enough quality.

The school's recently introduced phonics programme is working well. Pupils are eager to learn to read. Well-trained staff follow consistent routines so that pupils know what to expect. Pupils frequently practise using the sounds they know. They re-read books to improve their fluency. Any pupil who falls behind benefits from extra help.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their love of reading. They choose their own books from classroom book corners or the school library. They like discussing the class reading book with their talk partners. Pupils enjoy settling back to hear their teacher read to them each day at story time.

Children in the early years settle in well. They quickly develop their language and communication skills by singing songs and playing games. Children socialise happily with each other. They demonstrate high levels of curiosity and concentration. The curriculum in the early years is well planned and takes children's interests into account. However, it does not always match the ambition for what children could achieve.

Expectations for pupils' behaviour and attendance are high. Repeated modelling by staff means that most pupils conduct themselves well. Close work with some families has seen attendance steadily improve. Most pupils now attend school well.

Weekly lessons teach pupils about their feelings and emotions and how to be a good friend. They understand why they should respect others since, as one pupil explained, 'we should celebrate everyone'. Pupils contribute to their local community by, for example, donating to a nearby foodbank. They know their school is named after a local suffragette and can explain why Marie Weller was important.

There is a positive team spirit among staff. Their morale and motivation are high. They feel well supported by the school and the trust as they take on new roles and responsibilities.

Trustees know the school well. They have ensured that the school has access to the right resources so that it has a good capacity for continued improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not always adapted well enough to meet pupils' needs. A few pupils sometimes struggle to access new learning. Others find the work too easy. The school needs to ensure that the curriculum, including in the early years, is ambitious for all pupils.

- Teachers' pedagogical choices are not always well thought through. Learning activities sometimes divert pupils' attention away from securing important subject knowledge. Opportunities to make links to what pupils know already are missed. The school should make sure that teachers choose effective strategies to deliver the curriculum.
- Expectations of pupils' written communication are not consistent. Teachers do not always check pupils' knowledge of spelling, grammar and punctuation closely. They do not insist that pupils' writing skills are good enough. The school needs to make sure that pupils have the necessary knowledge and skills to communicate effectively when they write.

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	148571
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10298558
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Karen Falvey
Principal	Andrea Curtis (Executive principal)
Website	www.mariewelleracademy.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2021 in a new, purpose-built building. It initially accepted children into the Reception Year. There are now pupils in Year 1 and Year 2. The school will continue to grow, with a new year group being admitted at the start of each academic year until 2027.
- The school is part of The Hawksmoor Learning Trust. The board of trustees oversees the school.
- The executive principal, who is also the trust's CEO, is responsible for the school. A head of school was appointed in September 2023. He oversees the day-to-day running of the school.
- Many of the staff have only been appointed recently, including the leader responsible for the provision for pupils with SEND.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 met with the executive principal, the head of school and the deputy head of school. They also spoke with leaders responsible for the provision for pupils with SEND and the early years.
- The lead inspector met with two members of the board of trustees, including the chair of the board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, history, and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work. They heard some pupils read to a familiar adult. Inspectors also considered the curriculums for art, English and science.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from different year groups. They spoke with pupils informally and observed the behaviour of pupils during social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, parents and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and information about governance. They also considered information about pupils' attendance and behaviour, as well as the wider curriculum.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the results of Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Rachel Tordoff, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Oliver

Ofsted Inspector

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