

# Inspection of Mulberry Bush School

Abingdon Road, Standlake, Witney, Oxfordshire OX29 7RW

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Inspection dates:         | 24 and 25 September 2024 |
| The quality of education  | <b>Outstanding</b>       |
| Behaviour and attitudes   | <b>Outstanding</b>       |
| Personal development      | <b>Outstanding</b>       |
| Leadership and management | <b>Outstanding</b>       |
| Previous inspection grade | Outstanding              |

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since January 2018. The school received an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Act on 28 and 29 March 2023. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils thrive at this transformative school. Most pupils attend Mulberry Bush School having experienced childhood trauma. All arrive finding it difficult to be in a class or live among others. Expert staff rapidly build trusting and positive relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to feel safe and ready to learn. Pupils know the high expectations the school has for their learning and behaviour, and they constantly strive to meet them.

Pupils feel valued and listened to. They play an integral part in the school community by leading the school council and the 'get together' community meetings. Pupils learn how to be positive members of a group. They hold other pupils and themselves to account for their behaviour. Social times are joyful periods of the day. During which, staff provide pupils with a range of activities that match their interests. Pupils across the school interact with each other with kindness and respect.

Due to their complex needs, pupils sometimes find it hard to manage their emotions. When this happens, well-trained staff skilfully support them. Pupils receive an excellent package of support during their time here. This prepares them extremely well to be able to learn alongside others and live successfully in a family home.

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

The school's curriculum is highly ambitious and broad. It contains carefully constructed sequences of learning that meet pupils' individual needs precisely. The curriculum offer has been suitably amended to help pupils meet their education, health and care plan outcomes. Therapeutic activities, including speech and language, music and drama therapy, are a crucial part of the school day. These activities are accurately matched to pupils' needs. This holistic curriculum has a profoundly positive impact on pupils' well-being and learning. As such, pupils achieve exceptionally well.

As soon as a pupil starts, staff find out how well they can read. Staff use this information to understand what help to give pupils who have fallen behind with reading. They put in place highly effective additional activities. These activities help pupils to become capable and confident readers.

Staff have exceedingly strong knowledge about the curriculum they teach. They also receive specialist training about pupils' complex experiences and needs. Subsequently, they are experts about pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. They use this expertise to make impactful and bespoke adaptations to the curriculum.

A sense of calm and purpose pervades the school. Pupils behave extremely well. This is because staff use their specialist knowledge to set up the right learning environment for them. Lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils value their time at school and have extremely positive attitudes towards their learning.

Personal development is intricately woven through all areas of the school. This includes pupils cultivating their social skills, so they are responsible and safe in their community.

Pupils receive constant nurture and guidance from staff. This helps pupils to understand the impact of their behaviour and find ways to change it. Through personal, social and health education lessons, pupils learn about various cultural influences. They learn about the different views and beliefs people can have and why it is important to respect them. As a result, they are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The school's careers approach responds to the individual needs and aspirations of pupils. Pupils learn about the types of jobs they can do in the future. They learn about the skills needed to be in employment and have the chance to practise these.

This school is truly a community, where parents'/carers', staff and pupils' views are listened to and acted upon. Staff are immensely proud to work here. They believe in and are motivated by the vision that leaders have. School and charity leaders work well together to make sure that the provision in place for pupils is the best it can be. They are driven by the same moral aim to ensure that pupils who attend Mulberry Bush School, will leave here able to live successful and happy lives.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## 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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 123330   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Oxfordshire  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10296294   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Special  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Non-maintained special   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 5 to 12  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 18   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                      | Chris Pugh   |
| <b>CEO of the trust</b>                    | John Turberville   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Jessica Hooper   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.mulberrybush.org.uk">www.mulberrybush.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Dates of previous inspection</b>        | 28 and 29 March 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005      |

## Information about this school

- The Mulberry Bush School is part of The Mulberry Bush Organisation Limited, which is a registered charity.
- The Mulberry Bush School caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The inspectors only inspected the education provision at this school.

## 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.
- Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team. They also met with two trustees and the director of the provision.
- The lead inspector also met with representatives from two placing local authorities.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, humanities and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, the 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.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils in lessons and during play and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents including leaders' evaluations of the school, their school improvement plan, and minutes from governors' meetings.
- The inspectors considered parents and carers responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspectors took account of the views of staff through conversations and the responses to the online staff survey.
- 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**

Nina Marabese, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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