

Malcolm Arnold Preparatory School

Trinity Avenue, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN2 6JW

Inspection dates

11–12 July 2017

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the work of the school. They keep a close check on its provision. This helps them plan for future improvements with precision.
- Teaching is good because teachers plan lessons that build on what pupils already understand and can do, so that learning makes sense for pupils.
- The special educational needs coordinator has clear procedures for identifying the particular needs of pupils. She checks that the strategies she uses to provide support for these pupils are successful.
- Reading is taught well. Leaders with responsibility for English and mathematics provide staff with valuable training to improve the quality of their teaching.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and offers pupils the opportunity to learn a wide range of skills.
- Children get off to a strong start in the Reception classes. The early years leader forges useful links with parents and local pre-school settings to help teachers get to know the children's needs.
- The majority of pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. They are well prepared to start key stage 2.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils in lessons. This enables pupils to take part in the learning at a level that is appropriate for them.
- Pupils behave well around school. They are polite and speak confidently to visitors.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Leaders systematically monitor the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making. Their evaluation of some practices and the impact of staff training are not evaluated in sufficient depth to enable them to target improvements precisely enough.
- Teachers do not always check carefully enough that pupils understand what is being taught, especially in mathematics lessons.
- Sometimes, the activities teachers provide the pupils are not defined clearly enough. This leads to some pupils losing concentration and not making the progress they could.
- Leaders have improved pupils' rates of attendance overall. The attendance of a few disadvantaged pupils, however, remains too low.
- Middle leadership is not strong enough in some subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders evaluate more deeply the records they keep and the impact of staff training, and act on the information this provides to ensure that school is having the greatest impact on pupils' outcomes
 - all middle leaders develop the skills they need to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes in their areas of responsibility
 - leaders work more creatively with parents whose children's attendance remains too low.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers make better use of assessment information during lessons to ensure that explanations, tasks and resources are well matched to pupils' abilities and that pupils, especially boys, are fully engaged with their learning
 - teachers fully implement the school's strategy for teaching mathematics, adapting their approaches to meet the needs of all pupils, including those who are most able.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was taking maternity leave. The deputy headteacher is currently the acting headteacher. She is supported well by an executive headteacher, brokered by the David Ross Education Trust, to lead the school during the headteacher's absence. Leaders, including the local governing body and the academy trust, have been mindful of the need to provide stability during this time.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their plans for improvement are sufficiently detailed for the governing body to hold leaders to account for their work.
- The special educational needs coordinator has clear procedures in place to ensure that pupils with specific needs receive the support they require. She has forged useful links with a range of external agencies. She diligently tracks the progress pupils make, to ensure that the additional funding for these pupils is effectively spent so that they make strong progress. She provides training for staff, including a useful booklet of strategies to help staff provide the appropriate support for pupils with particular needs.
- The curriculum is broad and engaging for pupils. Each topic starts with a 'wow' event and finishes with a showcase of pupils' learning. Leaders ensure that pupils also benefit from a range of trips and visitors to bring their learning to life. Pupils from each year group join together in small groups to enjoy a short weekly session, called 'Broadening Horizons'. Inspectors observed pupils sewing, playing traditional outdoor games, learning to dance the cha-cha-cha, practising yoga and using the internet to find out about different countries.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The ethos of the school is evident in the school's values, known as 'virtues'. Pupils learn about a range of cultures. They visit a synagogue and have enjoyed listening to visitors who talk to them about Islamic culture. Pupils can learn to play musical instruments and sing at local events. Parents who speak English as an additional language are welcomed into school to read stories to pupils in their first language.
- Pupils learn about British values effectively. They are developing an understanding of the importance of the rule of law through their easily understood school code of conduct. They listen respectfully to each other's views in class. Pupils have a growing understanding of democracy as they vote for their classmates to represent them on the school council and as house captains.
- The primary school physical education and sport premium is used well to provide pupils with a range of sporting opportunities, such as tennis, gymnastics and dance. The funding has also been spent to improve teachers' confidence in teaching different aspects of physical education.
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding to offer support for disadvantaged pupils, to improve their attendance and to provide support for their learning. These pupils make strong progress as a result.
- Leaders manage the performance of staff well. When they spot that improvements to the quality of teaching can be made, they provide the appropriate training and support.

Leaders set clear, challenging targets for teachers and teaching assistants as part of the performance review cycle.

- Leaders with responsibility for English and mathematics provide staff with useful training to improve the quality of their teaching. They check carefully the progress pupils make. When they identify that improvements can be made, they make the necessary adjustments. They have implemented new approaches to the teaching of reading and mathematics this year. Reading is well taught. The new approach to mathematics is evident in pupils' books, but it is not yet being adapted consistently to the needs of all pupils.
- Leadership of some subjects other than English and mathematics is less well developed. These middle leaders are aware of the provision in their subject but they do not check the progress pupils make sufficiently well. This means they are not able to influence the quality of teaching and learning sufficiently well to ensure that all pupils make the best possible progress.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning regularly throughout the school. They do not, however, evaluate this information in sufficient detail or evaluate deeply enough the impact that training has on classroom practice.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body is highly ambitious for the school. Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are committed to ensuring that pupils are provided with a good-quality education.
- Governors benefit from training and support from the academy trust which helps the governing body to hold leaders to account for the progress pupils make and for provision and practices throughout the school. They receive regular reports from leaders and ask challenging questions during meetings.
- Governors take time to visit the school. They talk with pupils and staff to gather their views. They check that the improvements scheduled in the school's development plan are on track.
- The governing body carefully considers the effectiveness of its own work. There is a named governor for different subject areas and aspects of the school's work. Governors undertake some of their work in pairs so that they can improve the skills of new governors.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make sure that all the appropriate checks take place when staff and volunteers start working at the school. They ensure that staff receive appropriate training so they know how to recognise signs of potential abuse and how to report a concern, should one arise. Staff are also trained to meet the individual needs of particular pupils, for example those who have specific behavioural or medical needs.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They told inspectors that they have learned about stranger danger, how to cross a

road safely and how to keep themselves safe when they use modern technology.

- All parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, and those who spoke with an inspector, agree that their children are safe and happy in school.
- Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding meet every two weeks to ensure that safeguarding is effective. They provide staff with useful updates and reminders throughout the school year to keep this important aspect of their work at the front of everyone's mind. Records are secure but leaders do not always evaluate them in sufficient depth to guide future practice with precision.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good because teachers plan sequences of lessons that build upon what pupils know and can already do. This helps pupils to make sense of their learning.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to provide clear explanations for pupils. This helps pupils understand the ideas that are being taught.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils use a range of strategies, including their knowledge of phonics, to help them read unfamiliar words. As pupils become more fluent, they read with great expression and show an interest in particular authors.
- Typically, teachers provide additional explanations to pupils and encourage them to explain their thinking, making links skilfully to ideas that have previously been taught. For example, during a phonics lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to use their knowledge of spelling rules to think about whether they should double the consonant, helping them to decide if 'spotted' or 'spoted' was the correct spelling.
- Teaching assistants provide good support, particularly to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They provide guidance, support and encouragement so that these pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' books showed that teachers are increasingly encouraging pupils to explain their reasoning and demonstrate their understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Pupils' books also showed that teachers make sensible links between subjects. Pupils write at length across a range of subjects and put their mathematical skills to good use in subjects such as science. In line with the school's policy, teachers sometimes ask pupils to answer an additional, more challenging question to demonstrate their understanding even further.
- Usually, teachers make very effective use of questions to deepen pupils' understanding of new ideas. Occasionally, teachers do not probe deeply enough to eliminate all misunderstandings during the lesson.
- When teachers do not assess pupils' understanding carefully during lessons, some pupils, particularly the most able, are not sufficiently challenged. These pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics.
- Sometimes, teachers do not explain concepts well or provide pupils with clearly defined tasks. This leads to some pupils, especially boys, losing focus and not concentrating well in the lesson.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They speak politely to visitors and are keen to share their work and talk about their school.
- Some pupils who spoke with inspectors said that bullying was rare and others thought it did not happen at all. Pupils say that there are adults in school who they can talk to if they have any concerns, safe in the knowledge that the adult will listen and help them.
- Most pupils demonstrate pride in their work. Teachers encourage pupils to be 'Book Brilliant'. This sets the standard that leaders expect of pupils' presentation in their work. This is implemented consistently by teachers so that pupils' books are neat and well kept.
- The school promotes pupils' personal development well. Leaders provide pupils with a small book entitled 'Passport to the Moon'. This sets a series of tasks for pupils that are aimed at developing their skills around the home, in understanding how to stay fit and active, and how to be a positive member of the community. As pupils complete sufficient tasks, they present their achievements to governors and are rewarded with bronze, silver or gold awards.
- Pupils enter and leave the hall quietly for the school's daily act of worship. Pupils listen well to adults and respond respectfully when asked to reflect upon the theme for the day.
- Pupils take responsibility around school by representing their classmates on the school council or as house captains. In class, pupils are encouraged to help keep the classroom tidy. The school council has real impact. It suggested that adults wear high-visibility jackets on the playground, for example, so that pupils could spot them easily. During a recent meeting between the school council and governors, the pupils pointed out that occasionally the jackets were not being worn. This has now been remedied and their use is now consistent.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move around school sensibly. At playtime and lunchtime, they are well supervised. Some pupils play running games or use playground equipment enthusiastically, while others prefer to walk and talk with their friends.
- Overall, pupils' attendance has risen this year so that the overall level of attendance is higher than the national average for 2016. The family support worker has engaged effectively with several families to bring about this change. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has shown significant improvement this year, but it still remains below the national average.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and show positive attitudes to their learning. Some pupils, usually boys, lose concentration when teachers have not engaged them well

enough in the learning. The school makes effective use of alternative provision for any pupils who present significant behavioural challenges.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- This is the first year that the school has had pupils in Year 2. This means there is no previous assessment information for the end of key stage 1 that can be compared to national averages.
- Unconfirmed assessment information for Year 2 pupils in 2017 shows that more pupils have achieved the expected standard in each of reading, writing and mathematics than was seen nationally in 2016 for pupils of the same age. In addition, more pupils have achieved a greater depth of understanding in each of reading, writing and mathematics than was seen nationally in 2016 for pupils of the same age.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check in 2016 was above the national average. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who have achieved this milestone was even higher.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, make at least the progress that the school expects, with many making even better progress, indicating that they are diminishing the differences between their attainment and that of their peers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress from their individual starting points. This is because the leader tracks their progress closely and ensures that they receive the support they need to help them achieve well.
- The school's assessment information shows that most pupils in Years 1 and 2 have made strong progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics this year. In both year groups, however, fewer pupils achieve a greater depth of understanding in writing and mathematics than they do in reading.
- Leaders are not tracking the progress pupils make across subjects other than English and mathematics. This means they cannot be certain that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or the most able, make the progress of which they are capable.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is effective. The leader knows what is working well and identifies carefully where improvements can be made.
- The leader has established links with the nurseries that children attend before starting school. She capitalises on these relationships to gain useful information about the children before they start at Malcolm Arnold. She also offers home visits to parents so that they can contribute to the school's understanding of what their child knows, likes and can do.
- Most children start school with skills typically seen in children of their age. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the foundation stage has increased year on year since the school opened. It was above the national average in 2016 and has risen even further in 2017. This indicates that children make strong progress from their starting points.

- Children's work and their learning journeys demonstrate that they make strong progress over time across a range of subjects and skills.
- In lessons, teachers promote children's early language development well. For example, in mathematics, they ensured that children correctly used 'taller' and 'shorter' while they were measuring with cubes and a metre stick.
- Children's personal development is well promoted. Teachers and teaching assistants provide effective support for children, modelling the correct vocabulary for pupils and gently encouraging them to be independent and 'have a go'.
- Occasionally, teachers' explanations are not clear enough. When this happens, children do not get the best from the planned activities and they do not understand the ideas being taught as well as they could.

School details

Unique reference number	140946
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10031186

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

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	180
Appropriate authority	The academy trust
Chair	Susan Deane
Headteacher	Marie Lally
Telephone number	01604 931130
Website	www.malcolmarnoldprep.co.uk
Email address	office@malcolmarnoldprep.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened with Reception-aged children in September 2014 as a free school, with a Church of England denomination, as part of the David Ross Education Trust. It has grown each year so that it now has pupils from the Reception to Year 2.
- In September 2016, the school moved into a new, purpose-built school on the same site as the Malcom Arnold Academy.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. No pupil currently has an education, health and care plan.
- The school makes use of St James Church of England Primary School as an alternative

provider of education for a very small number of pupils, as needed.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, the executive headteacher, four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and an academy improvement leader who represented the David Ross Education Trust.
- Inspectors also held discussions with the school's special educational needs coordinator, leaders with responsibility for English, mathematics and the early years, and the family support worker. Inspectors spoke on the telephone with a member of staff at the alternative provision attended by one pupil.
- Inspectors undertook a tour of the school to see the learning taking place and observed learning in 12 lessons. Most of these observations were undertaken jointly with a school leader. Inspectors also examined a range of pupils' books from every class, jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils during playtime, lunchtime, during their daily act of worship and as they moved around school.
- Informal discussions were held with parents as they brought their children to school. Inspectors took note of the 51 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- There were no responses to either of the online surveys for staff or pupils. Inspectors met for discussions with a group of six staff and a group of six pupils. They spoke with pupils during lessons and playtimes and listened to two pupils reading.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school. This included minutes of meetings of the governing body, information about pupils' attainment and progress, staff training records, and information relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Di Mullan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Hawkes	Ofsted Inspector
Sean Powell	Ofsted Inspector

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