

Inspection of a good school: Maiden Erlegh School in Reading

81 Crescent Road, Reading RG1 5SL

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 September 2023

Outcome

Maiden Erlegh School in Reading continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Will Graham. This school is part of Maiden Erlegh Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jonathan Peck, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nicholas Jones.

What is it like to attend this school?

From the minute they join the school, pupils are encouraged to 'aim high, work together and be inclusive'. The trust's vision to 'develop a diverse and inclusive community' underpins the positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils at this school.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils rise to meet these expectations. Pupils know and understand the 'MER dream', which encapsulates the culture of high aspirations. As one pupil explained, 'The support I have been given by the school has given me hope for my future.'

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils get on well with each other and with their teachers. Pupils appreciate the strong academic and caring pastoral support that they receive from staff. Pupils value the focus on promoting positive mental health. Older pupils relish the opportunity to take on positions of responsibility, such as house captains or joining the student leadership team. A diverse range of clubs fosters pupils' interests and develops talents in activities such as chess, debating and board games. Pupils value the opportunity to participate in challenging projects, such as the gold and silver programmes.

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

The school has constructed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. The needs of pupils with SEND are accurately identified and well known by staff. This enables staff to adapt the curriculum effectively and give appropriate support where needed. In most subjects, the school has designed a full and comprehensive curriculum in key stage 3. Knowledge

and skills are carefully sequenced and gradually build over time. For example, in mathematics and computer science, pupils revisit content in a logical sequence, which progressively builds in complexity. This enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and deepen their understanding of key skills and content. However, in a small number of subjects, the school has not completed their curriculum refinements in key stage 3 to enable pupils to learn and remember key concepts in depth. This means that the impact of the curriculum in these subjects is not as strong as in other subjects.

Teachers, in most subjects, use assessment effectively. They check the knowledge and skills pupils need to know and remember before they move on. In some subjects, such as mathematics, teachers use 'exit tickets' to identify misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge. This helps to inform the next steps in pupils' learning. Pupils who have fallen behind or are at the earlier stage of learning to read, receive appropriate support. Specialist teaching in small groups helps pupils catch up quickly. Similarly, pupils who require support in mathematics receive specialist individual instruction. This helps pupils to embed crucial skills and builds vital confidence.

The school prioritises the wider personal development of pupils. Well-trained staff deliver a thoughtfully constructed programme of lessons and tutor-time activities. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) incorporates key knowledge and skills that helps to deepen pupils' understanding of critical concepts. A sharp focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is skilfully embedded in the curriculum. Relationships and sex education is age-appropriate. Pupils relish the wide range of trips and visits that enhance the curriculum. Support for making appropriate and informed choices about where to study at the end of Year 11 is strong. Pupils value the independent careers advice and guidance that they receive.

The trust's commitment to providing 'opportunity, diversity and success for all' underpins leaders' high aspirations for the school. Trustees are involved in the growth of the school effectively. They know the school well and hold leaders to account robustly. Trust staff provide critical challenge and appropriate support. Staff benefit from thoughtful continual professional development. Regular subject meetings deepen teachers' specialist knowledge which underpins their work in lessons well. Support for teachers at the start of their career is strong. The school prioritises well-being. Staff appreciate leaders' approach to managing workload and cherish the individualised support that they receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subjects in key stage 3 need strengthening further. In a few subjects, pupils are not learning as deeply as they could. The trust should ensure that the curriculum refinements are completed and staff check pupils' learning closely to support them to achieve highly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2018.

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	141886
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10288051
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	885
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nicholas Jones
Headteacher	Wil Graham
Website	www.maidenerleghschoolreading.co.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Maiden Erlegh Trust.
- The school uses six unregistered alternative providers to meet the needs of a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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 held meetings with senior leaders of the school, members of staff and pupils. The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of the trust and some trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, computing and geography. For each deep dive, 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 and puts pupils' interest first.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nina Marabese

His Majesty's Inspector

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