

Much Marcle CofE Primary School

Address: Much Marcle, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 2LY

Unique reference number (URN): 151252

Inspection report: 23 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

The school converted to an academy relatively recently. As such, there are no published outcomes for the new school. However, all pupils achieve well from their starting points. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who are disadvantaged. Pupils in early years and key stage 1 achieve highly when learning to read and securing the phonics knowledge they need for later learning.

Pupils' books show clear progress, especially in English. Leaders' sharp focus on improving pupils' handwriting is starting to have impact, but is not yet consistently embedded. That said, pupils secure the basic skills they need in spelling and sentence structure to produce impressive pieces of writing. Pupils confidently recall important learning across the curriculum, using the key vocabulary identified by leaders.

Pupils at all stages are ready for their next steps in education. Pupils in Year 6 are very well prepared for secondary school.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

At Much Marcle, there is a sharp focus on ensuring that pupils attend well, and they do. Leaders' strategy for improving attendance is rooted in their deep understanding of pupils and families. As a result, their work is highly successful. Sensitive, effective support is put in place, when needed. Pupils really want to be at school learning and having fun with their friends. This means that they benefit from all that the school has to offer. All pupils' attendance is above national average.

Pupils behave incredibly well around school. Bullying is rare because pupils care deeply for one another. If bullying does happen, it is dealt with swiftly. Pupils are explicitly shown how to behave well, and staff model their high expectations. Pupils, from the early years up, understand the consistent routines and follow them seamlessly. However, pupils also behave well because they feel such a strong sense of community and belonging. Staff and leaders use their secure understanding of pupils' needs to make adaptations, where needed. This means that all pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who join the school at different points in their educational journeys, settle, learn and thrive.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that the broad and balanced curriculum is taught consistently well in the mixed-age classes. The curriculum, from the early years up, is carefully designed to meet all pupils' needs and to reflect the local community, of which pupils are very proud.

Leaders ensure that teachers have the expert knowledge and skills they need to deliver the curriculum consistently well. Teachers routinely check on what pupils have learned. Pupils have regular opportunities to revisit important learning and frequent chances to practise using what they know. This means that they develop deep knowledge and understanding

across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 2 recall learning about the Great Fire of London with impressive detail.

Leaders have an insightful understanding of the quality of the curriculum and of teaching across the school. They ensure that agreed teaching strategies are used consistently and effectively. This means that pupils know what to expect as they move up through the school and that children in the early years secure strong foundations for later learning. All pupils benefit from a well-taught phonics programme. High-quality texts across the curriculum foster a deep love of reading, and the sharp focus on developing vocabulary is highly effective.

Early years

Strong standard 

Children at Much Marcle get off to a flying start. Leaders have prioritised the early years, and staff are adept at ensuring that the provision precisely matches all children's needs. As soon as children enter the early years, whether in Nursery Year or Reception Year, leaders and staff identify and address any barriers to success. Carefully planned transition helps children become familiar with routines and settle in quickly. Leaders identify older 'buddies' for children as they start school. As a result, children in the early years make friends and develop confidence and a real love of learning.

Leaders and teachers are extremely knowledgeable. They make astute decisions about the curriculum and the learning environment. For example, children in the Reception class learn managed risk-taking and develop core strength and fine motor skills while accessing the workbench area. Every opportunity is maximised. High-quality interactions between staff and children abound. As a result, children engage in learning activities for sustained periods. They develop resilience and happily help their friends to have a go.

The early years curriculum, including for early reading and mathematics, is carefully constructed to help children develop a secure knowledge and prepare them well for later learning.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

The highly inclusive culture is rooted in warm, respectful relationships. All pupils, whatever their starting points or vulnerabilities, feel a strong sense of belonging. They achieve well and flourish. Leaders' sharply focused ambition to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are fully integrated into all aspects of school life, is fully realised.

Leaders and staff invest time and care in getting to know pupils and families very well, from the moment they start school. This enables concerns to be identified swiftly and effective support to be put in place promptly. Where appropriate, leaders work closely with specialist external agencies. Leaders tailor support precisely to meet individual needs and review it robustly to make sure that it has the intended impact. Staff are skilful at adapting learning to remove the barriers that some pupils face. They also adeptly enable pupils to develop independence and to seamlessly choose and use strategies that support their own learning. This provides pupils with skills that will stand them in good stead for later learning and for life.

Leaders carefully allocate additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. This is used with good impact to support both academic and pastoral needs.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders at all levels know the school incredibly well. This means that they can skilfully identify strengths and areas to develop further. Leaders are driven by a shared, clear purpose to ensure the very best for all, staff and pupils alike. They lead by example and create a highly positive, supportive and inclusive culture. Leaders carefully reflect on their work. They make deliberate, informed decisions and empower staff, through highly effective training and resources, to deliver their vision consistently well. As a result, the school is very effective.

Local governors and the multi-academy trust also know the school and local community well. They offer the right level of support and challenge to help the school to continue to improve. Leaders value the expertise that the trust brings, and staff value the opportunities to work with colleagues and share good practice across the trust's network of schools. Governors and the multi-academy trust ensure that all the statutory duties are met, including for safeguarding.

Staff value the careful consideration that is given to their workload and wellbeing. The strong sense of community extends to the staff team, who view themselves as a family. Staff, pupils and families are unanimous in their praise for the school's work.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils are being very well prepared to become active, responsible members of their local community and more broadly for life in modern Britain. They show integrity, and the school's core values of respect, perseverance and generosity shine through in everything that everyone does. For example, pupils know that 'we get better at things because making mistakes helps us to learn and grow.'

Leaders have designed an ambitious, coherent programme of personal development. They have paid careful attention to the school's rural context. For example, pupils are incredibly proud to belong to houses named after local varieties of apple. Pupils are instilled with a sense of pride through tending their house apple trees in the local community. Pupils also benefit from learning about the wider world. They appreciate other cultures and beliefs and enjoy visiting different places of worship.

Pupils develop a secure knowledge of the personal, social and health education curriculum. This prepares pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, with the important, age-appropriate knowledge they need about relationships, growing up and keeping safe. Pupils are taught to be very self-aware and to manage their feelings. As a result, pupils leave school with secure skills that boost their emotional growth. Leaders astutely identify pupils who need additional pastoral support. This support is highly effective in ensuring that pupils' wellbeing and social, emotional and mental health needs are met.

A broad range of after-school and lunchtime clubs, visits and opportunities provide lasting enrichment for all pupils. Leaders ensure that any barriers to taking part are removed. Pupils benefit from a range of purposeful leadership opportunities in school. From helping play the music in assembly to taking on a parliamentary role in the pupil parliament, pupils at Much Marcle take on responsibility with pride.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are incredibly proud of their school and the important roles they play in making it such a lovely place to be. They are warmly welcomed into school each morning by staff who know them, and their families, extremely well. This helps pupils to feel safe and well looked after. The strong sense of community enables pupils and staff alike to flourish. Here, pupils firmly understand that 'from tiny seeds, grow mighty trees!'

There are very high expectations for pupils' behaviour and academic success. Pupils relish living up to these and love learning. They attend and achieve well. At each stage through the school, pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in education. Pupils who face barriers to learning or wellbeing benefit from the school's unwavering commitment to inclusion. No stone is left unturned in providing highly effective support for them. Consequently, all pupils thrive.

Pupils behave impeccably. They are kind and considerate to each other, to staff and to visitors. They are very respectful of their school environment and play happily together in this small, mixed-age class school. Pupils do not worry about poor behaviour or bullying because they say it rarely happens, and if it does, staff quickly resolve any concerns.

All pupils play an active role in the life of the school, which sits firmly at the heart of its local community. Pupils learn what makes their local community special and take pride in belonging to their school houses, named after local apples. Pupils also learn about wider issues and life in modern Britain. For example, pupils vote for leaders of the Pupil Parliament, including their prime minister, deputy prime minister and ministers in various cabinet positions. This helps pupils to develop a real sense of responsibility and belonging through their positive contributions.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed the recent improvements to the teaching of handwriting so that pupils' handwriting becomes consistent across the breadth of the curriculum.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Canon Andrew Teale, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Rob Pizii.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders, including the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and other leaders. They met with the CEO of the multi-academy trust and with other representatives of the trust, including trust leaders, trustees and members of the local governing body. They also spoke to a representative from the diocese and to parents at the school gate.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school is part of the Diocese of Hereford. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in March 2026. The next inspection will be within 5 years of the last section 48 inspection.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Laura Davies

Lead inspector:

Rachel Henrick, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Martina Abbott, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 23 June 2026

School and pupil context

School capacity

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Our grades explained**Exceptional**

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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