

Inspection of Maharishi Free School

Cobbs Brow Lane, Lathom, Ormskirk, Lancashire L40 6JJ

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 July 2025

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Edwards. This school is part of Maharishi School Trust Ltd, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Birnbaum.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely well cared for in this nurturing school. Staff know each pupil individually. This helps staff to tailor support promoting pupils' positive social, emotional and mental health. Pupils benefit from strong pastoral support.

Pupils are happy and play harmoniously together at playtime. They are incredibly proud of their successful fundraising efforts for new playground equipment. In the secondary school's recreational space, pupils are free to explore their creativity. For example, the sound of a guitar and pupils singing softly floats in the air.

The school encourages pupils to behave well. It provides suitable support for the small number of pupils who struggle to regulate their behaviour effectively. As a result, learning is rarely disrupted.

Since the previous inspection, the school has refined the early years curriculum. Children in the Reception class have a secure understanding of key vocabulary. They are well prepared for the demands of key stage 1. Across the curriculum, pupils achieve well.

In the primary phase, the school provides opportunities for pupils to represent their school in an array of sporting events, such as dodgeball, multisport and football. In the secondary phase, pupils value the leadership experience they gain through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

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

Pupils study an appropriate range of subjects. The breadth of the curriculum has widened since the previous inspection, but the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects remains at its heart. The school has thought about how pupils' learning should build from Reception to Year 11. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, which helps them to deliver the curriculum with clarity. They choose suitable activities that help pupils to apply and to practise their knowledge. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions. That said, at times, teachers do not check pupils' prior knowledge sufficiently well. As a result, some gaps are missed. This hampers how well some pupils remember their learning over time because gaps in knowledge are not identified or addressed.

The school has strong processes in place to swiftly identify any additional needs that pupils may have. Starting in the Reception class, staff adeptly adapt the curriculum to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND, alongside their peers, develop a secure understanding and progress well through the curriculum.

Children begin to learn phonics as soon as they join the school. Most pupils read fluently and confidently. Younger pupils talk excitedly about their favourite books and authors. In the Reception class, children enjoy joining in with rhymes. In the primary phase, some pupils struggle to keep up with the pace of the phonics programme. The school accurately

identifies who these pupils are. However, the catch-up support that is in place is not as effective as it could be. In the secondary phase, the school's reading strategy is in an embryonic stage. As such, it does not identify pupils who struggle with reading. This means that there are some pupils who do not receive the support that they need to read well. As a result, some pupils do not develop the fluency they need to access the curriculum.

There is a culture of mutual respect and understanding between staff and pupils. The school gently teaches pupils how to behave. Pupils are polite and friendly. They wish staff and visitors a good day. Most pupils are attentive and follow teachers' instructions. In the Reception class, well-established routines help children to settle in quickly. The school designs activities that help them to become inquisitive learners. This stands them in good stead throughout their time in the school. Although pupils typically enjoy school, some do not attend frequently enough. This is because the school's strategy for improving attendance is in its infancy and, as such, some pupils still do not attend school frequently enough. They miss out on wider school experiences and important learning opportunities.

The school equips pupils with the knowledge and experiences that they need for life in modern Britain. For instance, pupils have a clear understanding of, and respect for, different religions. Pupils articulately explain their understanding of consent, how to keep themselves safe online and how to eat healthily. The careers programme offers pupils insight into a range of different jobs. They are prepared well for their next steps in education, employment or training.

The trustees have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have supported the school in making changes to its curriculum since the previous inspection. The trustees hold the school to account well. Staff are happy to work in the school. They feel valued and cared for. For example, they appreciate the 'golden ticket day'. Most staff say that leaders take staff's workload into account. The school is strengthening its professional development offer for staff in the secondary phase to build on the effective practice that is already in place in primary.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not use assessment strategies as well as they could. As a result, a small number of pupils are less confident in recalling what they have been taught and struggle to connect new ideas to prior learning. The school should ensure that teachers check pupils' recall of prior learning and address any gaps in knowledge to enable them to build learning securely over time.

- Some pupils do not receive effective support to help them to read well. This hampers pupils' reading fluency and confidence. The school should ensure that it sharpens its focus on reading to better identify any deficits in pupils' reading knowledge and to ensure that pupils who find reading difficult receive effective support to catch up quickly and become successful readers.
- The school's work to improve attendance rates is not having sufficient impact. There are some pupils who do not attend school frequently or are persistently absent and this has not improved over time. These pupils miss out on learning the curriculum and benefiting from all the school has to offer. The school should ensure that it takes swift action to implement and embed its attendance strategy so that pupils' attendance rates rise.

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	137498
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10337691
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Ian Birnbaum
Headteacher	Lisa Edwards
Website	www.maharishischool.com
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 October 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a single academy trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- 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

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 any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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.
- The inspectors also visited lessons and reviewed samples of work in other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- An inspector observed pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke with trustees, including the chair of the trust board. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses shared through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also spoke to parents at school drop off.

Inspection team

Jenny Jones, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ian Shackleton

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025