

Mellers Primary School



Our curriculum embraces the unique, extraordinary quality of our school



Headteacher Amanda Dawson

Headteacher Amanda Dawson describes Mellers Primary as a “unique, extraordinary school”, and an “oasis in the heart of the community”. Based in Radford, Nottingham, the school has a reputation for “providing an education of the highest standard”; Amanda tells *The Parliamentary Review* how it aims for excellence in everything it does. As a result, its pupils are well equipped for secondary school, college, universities and the world of work beyond.

We aim for our pupils to be fulfilled, well rounded, hopeful and brimming with aspiration. This focus on aspiration has been sparked by our observation that society can put “glass ceilings” in place for communities like ours, with the current hostile environment discriminating against many of our families. In this climate, therefore, our work has a strong moral and political imperative for change, and this is a powerful driver for us all.

Challenges

As well as the negative perceptions and barriers that society can put in the way of social mobility, our families face other challenges. The city of Nottingham ranks fourth out of the 326 districts in England of Income Deprivation Affecting Children, and Nottingham is the most deprived of the core cities. At least 37 per cent of pupils attending Mellers may be experiencing family income deprivation in comparison with 21 per cent nationally. Currently, 90 per cent of our children come from ethnic minority backgrounds and 61 per cent have a language other than English as their first language – and there are 40 languages spoken at Mellers.

REPORT CARD MELLERS PRIMARY SCHOOL

- » Headteacher: Amanda Dawson
- » Founded in 1971
- » Location: Radford, Nottingham
- » Type of school: Maintained Community School
- » No. of students: 430
- » Currently rated “Good” by Ofsted, and awaiting reinspection for Outstanding
- » www.mellersprimary.co.uk

“Last week, one of our former pupils, a young Black British man, came to see me to let me know that he has been offered a place to read medicine at Cambridge. I felt proud and privileged to have been part of his journey”

On entry to our nursery class, the vast majority of pupils are assessed as being significantly below national expectations in all areas, and very low in communication and language development.

Despite these statistics, which could be perceived as challenges or hurdles, our pupils make exceptional progress in all aspects of their learning, and by the time they leave Mellers for secondary school, they have caught up and often outperformed other children across the country. In year 6, the final year of primary school, all pupils are tested in maths, English, spelling and grammar and writing; Mellers pupils' results are in line with and often better than the national average, and their progress is significantly above the national average.

How do we, as a school community, achieve this culture of excellence?

FED Leadership

As school leaders at all levels, the Future, Engage, Deliver model of leadership has supported our journey towards excellence. We're absolutely clear about our mission and our vision for our community, which we live and breathe, and which is understood and shared by everyone. In order to translate that vision into action, it's critical to engage everyone and "get the right people on the bus" so that we're all heading in the same direction

and committed to excellence in every aspect. This ensures that we're able to deliver and actually affect change, like a "golden thread" running through our school development.

Inspiring teaching

Without inspiring teaching, the accelerated progress that our pupils make would not be possible. Our teachers, whether newly qualified or experienced, benefit from excellent coaching, engagement with research, clear and effective leadership, joined-up professional development and a collegiate approach to our work. We've honed our practice over the years and have reached the conclusion that coaching people into excellence with clear, incremental steps is far more effective and sustainable than a punitive, punishing regime of school improvement. Of course, this also has a significant and positive impact on wellbeing, the bedrock of our work.

Exciting curriculum

We have invested time, energy, thought and discussion into establishing a broad and balanced curriculum that reflects our needs as a community. Our history is based on the "Nottingham: City of Rebels" theme and addresses concepts such as equality, suffrage, slavery, freedom and democracy. We use our local resources and facilities as often

The wellbeing of the whole school community is the bedrock of everything we do



In striving for excellence, we aim to smash glass ceilings





Looking after Fluffy and the other hens helps children develop a sense of responsibility



Year 6 students enjoying a residential visit to Boggle Hole

as we can to support our curriculum: why visit the Thames when we have the Trent and Leen on our doorstep? All our children learn to play a brass instrument and will pass an ABRSM graded exam before they leave to go to secondary school. Mellers has the largest number of children taking and passing graded music exams in Nottingham, and these children all continue playing their brass instruments when they go on to secondary school and attend the Nottingham Music Hub orchestras and ensembles. All our children attend swimming lessons and are able to swim 100 metres or more by the time they leave us; we have close links with local sports associations to which we signpost our gifted athletes. We firmly believe that offering a rich and diverse curriculum with opportunities for excellence will improve our pupils' life chances.

Closing the gap

Early language and communication are critical to our pupils' ability to access the curriculum and make progress, so we have developed our own programme, with carefully trained teachers and teaching assistants providing specific support to individuals and groups of children to develop their language and literacy. Our parents are vital to the success of this support, attending open classrooms, parent courses and reading mornings in school. Place 2 Be, our counselling service, provides crucial support for all children at Mellers as

and when they need it, at different levels of intensity, to help them become resilient, confident learners.

Any pupils that are falling behind are identified quickly, their learning needs are established, and they are given extra assistance to help them catch up. We make sure that children are able to read fluently and develop a love of reading (the skill and the will) because we know that reading is the key that will unlock the curriculum, learning and opportunities. Everywhere you look, you can see books that entice you to read them. Phonics teaching is an important part of the curriculum for our younger children, and Reading Recovery supports those children who need extra help. In fact, this programme is so successful that in 2019, the year 6 pupil with the highest reading test score had been helped by Reading Recovery when he was in year 1, and that teacher continued to track his progress throughout the years to ensure that he was keeping up. We celebrated his success with huge pride.

Last week, one of our former pupils, a young Black British man, came to see me to let me know that he has been offered a place to read medicine at Cambridge. I felt proud and privileged to have been a part of his journey, and both joyful and relieved to see the cracks beginning to appear in that glass ceiling.

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