

# Sundon Lower School

Streatley Road, Upper Sundon, Luton, LU3 3PQ

## Inspection dates

3–4 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good		2
Quality of teaching	Good		2
Achievement of pupils	Good		2
Early years provision	Good		2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Leaders, including governors, strive for excellence and set clear priorities for improvement. Since the school became an academy, they have ensured that pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are good.
- Leaders make sure staff receive the training they need to do their jobs well.
- Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel safe. They value their small school community and get on well together.
- Teaching is good. Staff have good relationships with pupils and promote pupils' understanding of important values very well.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and in their all-round personal development.
- Leaders use effective systems to track how well pupils are doing and provide extra help for those in danger of falling behind.
- Communication with parents is good. Leaders seek the views of parents and keep them well informed.
- The early years provision is good. Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception class.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always expect pupils to present their work well or use their targets when writing in subjects other than English.
- On occasion, the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, and pupils are not given enough opportunities to write extensively.
- Teachers, including in the early years, do not make the most of every opportunity to really inspire learning.
- In some lessons, teaching assistants are not given enough guidance by leaders on how to support pupils' learning.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons and an assembly. Five observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. In all, three members of staff were seen teaching.
- The inspector looked at samples of work from all classes, spoke to pupils about their work during lessons and listened to pupils read.
- The inspector held meetings with a group of pupils, members of the governing body, leaders and staff.
- The inspector took account of 13 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector analysed the response from 11 questionnaires completed by school staff.
- The inspector observed the school's work, looked at progress and attendance information, improvement plans, evidence of the monitoring of teaching and documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy school in April 2013 and is part of the Harlington and Sundon Academy Trust. When its predecessor school, also known as Sundon Lower School, was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2008, it was judged to be good.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White background. About one fifth of the school's population is made up of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average and is equivalent to about one fifth of the school's population.
- The pupil premium funding, which provides support for disadvantaged pupils, applies to less than a tenth of the pupils in the school. This is well below the national average.
- Early years provision comprises of one class with nursery-age children who attend in the mornings or afternoons and Reception-age children who attend full time.
- Since becoming an academy, the school has experienced staff and leadership changes. A new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2013.
- The headteacher of Sundon Lower school is also the headteacher of Harlington Lower School which is the other lower school in the academy trust. The two schools share the same governing body.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise attainment further by making sure teachers:
  - consistently give the most able pupils more challenging work that helps them to reach their full potential, and provide all pupils with more opportunities to complete extensive pieces of writing
  - expect pupils to present their work well and work towards their writing targets whenever they write, in all subjects
  - inspire a zest for learning so all pupils, including children in the early years, make the best possible progress.
- Improve the way leaders manage the performance of staff by providing more guidance to teaching assistants on how they can best contribute to pupils' learning in lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, including governors, are highly ambitious for the school. They set realistic targets and have overcome the challenges presented by staff changes since the school became an academy. Leaders have united pupils and staff in a common sense of purpose. As a result, pupils do well academically and in their personal development, and behaviour is good.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, is highly effective in demonstrating her aims to staff and setting clear priorities for all to work towards. She uses the expertise and experience she has gained by running both schools in the academy trust to improve teachers' understanding of good practice. Together with all leaders, she maintains good links with parents and makes sure they understand the school's work.
- Middle leaders check the quality of teaching in their subjects and know how well pupils are doing. They identify areas for development and offer good support to staff who are less experienced. Leaders make good use of outside expertise to verify their own evaluations of how well the school is doing, and to check that their assessments of pupils' learning are accurate.
- Leaders check the performance of staff regularly and set targets for them to work towards. Training given to staff matches the priorities set by the school. A positive response from the questionnaires returned by staff indicates they feel well supported. However, when leaders check the quality of teaching, they do not always give sufficient guidance to teaching assistants to enable them to make the most effective contribution to pupils' learning.
- Leaders have carefully evaluated their assessment systems in the light of the recent changes to the national curriculum and are developing new systems to take these into account. The progress of every pupil, including children in the early years, is thoroughly tracked.
- The pupil premium funding is used to benefit individual pupils, leading to better progress and rising achievement. By the end of Year 4, any gaps in performance between these pupils and their peers, identified, when they first enter the school, are closing.
- Leaders are committed to making sure that every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed. They quickly provide extra help for those who need it, including the most able pupils, when this is needed. However, leaders recognise the need to encourage all teachers to provide even more challenging tasks for the most able pupils.
- The well-balanced curriculum provides many interesting experiences which pupils enjoy. Their involvement in musical performances and residential trips contribute well to pupils' personal and social development. The cultural diversity of the school's population is celebrated and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. The school's 'values' curriculum features strongly in lessons and assemblies. It helps pupils to understand and demonstrate respect for others, tolerance and responsibility and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The primary sports funding is spent effectively on widening sports and gymnastics opportunities for pupils and to develop staff expertise in delivering physical education lessons. As a result, pupils' participation and enjoyment are increasing and the quality of teaching is improving.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is effective. Governors enable the sharing of facilities and resources between the two schools for which they are responsible. They know the quality of teaching and how well the school is doing and set clear priorities. Governors make sure that school activities promote key British values, such as respect and tolerance. They visit frequently and ask the right questions if they have any concerns. Governors are very clear about the link between good teaching and good achievement and base decisions about teachers' pay upon this understanding. They offer suitable support to staff and

check the performance of the headteacher. Governors know how well pupils are doing and check the effect of the pupil premium spending on achievement. They work well with the 'Parent Focus' group and gather parents' views systematically, and use this information to inform the decisions they make. Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities and make sure that the arrangements to keep pupils safe meet statutory requirements.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. From the time children start in the early years, they respond well to the school's expectations. Pupils understand the school's rules and sanctions. They are keen to behave well and achieve praise for their efforts, which contributes strongly to the attention they pay in lessons and the good progress they make.
- Pupils recognise that some may find good behaviour difficult. As one pupil commented, 'Some pupils have wobbly days.' Pupils say that staff do all they can to help everyone to behave well. The school's logs show that incidents are fully recorded and that the behaviour of individuals improves over time.
- Pupils behave well with a range of adults. They show tolerance to each other and understand that other pupils' backgrounds and faiths need to be respected because the school strongly instils these values. They understand key ideas, such as democracy and fairness, which are promoted well during assemblies, class discussions and in the school council.
- Pupils enthuse about many of the activities on offer. They talk keenly about learning French and playing the ukulele and African drums. They do not always show the same level of enthusiasm for all subjects as they say they do not always get enough opportunity to write longer, descriptive stories or do harder work.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders make sure there are stringent systems and regular training for staff to ensure pupils are kept safe. Pupils receive good guidance during lessons, visits and assemblies on how to stay safe.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They value the care provided by staff and know that staff will help them should any problems arise. They say they like the opportunities they have to learn about keeping safe, for example, road safety. During the inspection, leaders organised a visit to the school by a heavy goods truck, illustrating effectively to pupils the dangers on the road.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying for their age. One pupil said, 'We have no bullies here.' They talk with maturity about the anti-bullying and e-safety guidance they get from the school to help them to understand potential dangers.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Staff know pupils well. They consistently promote good behaviour and positive relationships. They expect pupils to cooperate and work together well. They encourage pupils to concentrate and listen to adults and to each other. As a result, pupils make good progress in their reading, literacy and mathematics.
- Teachers, including in the early years, consistently promote pupils' understanding of the key values promoted by the school. They encourage pupils to celebrate their own success and the achievements of others. They teach pupils about important people who have made a difference. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Key Stage 1 were able to name early pioneers in space travel. In Year 4, work in books contained well-constructed examples of pupils' writing about the Queen and her important role in British society.
- Teachers talk to pupils about how well they are doing and make sure pupils understand the marking comments in their work. They give good guidance on how to improve and they praise pupils' efforts.

Teachers make sure pupils are clear about their work and what they should achieve by the end of lessons. They ask relevant questions, expect pupils to explain their answers and they correct any misunderstandings. However, staff do not always insist that pupils present their work well enough or use their writing targets when writing in subjects other than English.

- Teaching assistants work well with pupils of all abilities, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They play an important role in developing pupils' confidence, especially when working with individuals or with small groups. However, in some lessons, they do not contribute effectively enough to pupils' learning.
- Leaders make sure staff have a consistent approach to the teaching of reading. Pupils achieve well in reading and learning about phonics because they are taught these skills frequently. Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills and provide good opportunities for them to learn how to write for a wide range of purposes.
- Teachers link subjects together well in interesting topics which pupils enjoy. They provide well-designed practical tasks, especially in mathematics, that aid pupils' understanding. For example, during the inspection, the teacher gave pupils the right resources and level of work to help them to understand fractions. Pupils, including the most able, made good progress because they enjoyed the task. However, not all teachers, including in the early years, make the most of pupils' interest, or ensure tasks are challenging or inspiring enough to encourage all pupils to make the very best progress.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- When children start in the early years their skills are broadly typical for their age. As pupils move through the school, they make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 2, attainment is above average. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 4, their attainment is above that typically expected for their age.
- Achievement is strongest in reading because of the school's drive to make sure pupils do well. Pupils read widely; they say they enjoy the library books and using the computers for research. Pupils in the Year 1 and Year 2 class use their learning about phonics well to help them tackle new words.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Leaders check the progress they make frequently. Staff who work with these pupils provide tasks that enable them to do well academically and socially. Pupils are involved in setting their personal goals, which are shared with parents and reviewed regularly.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups are given good support by teachers and make good progress in line with their classmates.
- Pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium funding benefit from additional help that is matched to their individual needs; this ensures they progress well. The school's records show that, by the end of Year 4, any gaps in their performance in reading, writing and mathematics relative to other pupils are closing.
- In 2014, the proportion of the most able pupils who achieved the higher National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 2 was above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. The school is providing extra help for these pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 in order for them to achieve their full potential. However, the most able pupils do not always receive the right level of work in lessons to enable them to make the best possible progress.

### **The early years provision** is good

- Leadership of the early years is good. Leaders from both schools within the academy trust work well together to ensure that teaching and achievement in the early years are good. They maintain an overview

of planned activities for children and check how well children are doing. They make sure there are good arrangements to support children when they start school and to help parents to be involved in their children's learning.

- Children's behaviour is good. They get on well together and the younger children of nursery age settle quickly with the older reception-age children. They share resources and are interested in the tasks on offer. Children listen well to adults. They persevere and develop confidence because of the support they receive from staff.
- Teaching is generally good. The attractive early years base is well organised and staff make sure children use a range of resources indoors and outside. Staff create a good balance between tasks that children choose for themselves and those that are adult led. They develop children's speaking and listening skills well and promote positive attitudes to learning. However, sometimes, adults do not fully capitalise upon children's interest by making sure all tasks are sufficiently stimulating.
- Children make good progress in all areas of learning. They acquire good basic numeracy and literacy skills and steadily build upon what they already know. They understand the world around them and learn about places and cultures different to their own. Children make good gains in their personal and social skills. As a result, they are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138939
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	449950

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	63
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Robert Marsden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Deborah Shelvey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected as an academy
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