

Shelton Lower School

Lower Shelton Road, Marston Moretaine, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 0LS

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This school has improved quickly because staff and governors have worked together effectively to ensure pupils are well taught, very well cared for and make good progress.
- Leaders know the school's strengths and have focused their attention effectively on areas that needed improvement, including pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics and writing.
- Teaching and assessment are good. Activities are challenging and carefully organised to support learning. Consequently, pupils of different ages and abilities make good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Provision in the early years is good and children are well prepared for key stage 1. Effective leadership and teaching help the children make good progress and the quality of their writing has firmly improved.
- Disadvantaged pupils are well supported and make good progress in most subjects, including reading.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards learning are outstanding. They work very hard and demonstrate a consistently high level of commitment in all lessons and activities.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. All staff, governors and parents help pupils to live by the school's values. As a result, pupils readily understand the value of learning, caring for others and serving their community well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength and their effective school parliament builds their commitment to British values, including democracy and the rule of law.
- Governors are highly effective when offering support and challenge to leaders. They fulfil their leadership role very well and have helped improve the school.
- In mathematics, pupils including the most able, are sometimes not provided with the most challenging work of which they are capable. As a result, they are prevented from reaching the highest standards of knowledge and skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics so that pupils, including the most able, reach the very highest expected standards for their different ages, by making sure that:
 - work and activities support pupils to apply their knowledge and skills to the most challenging work more quickly, as soon as they have demonstrated that they have the necessary understanding and confidence to handle it.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has introduced significant improvements to the school since her appointment in 2014. Staff and governors share a very clear and caring vision for delivering nothing less than high-quality teaching, good progress for pupils and ensuring their excellent personal development as self-confident, caring citizens. Leaders and staff share these very high expectations effectively with all parents.
- In the period since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have successfully completed the formal arrangements to link the school with the neighbouring Southill Lower School. Leaders have been highly effective in sharing expertise and resources between the schools and supporting staff to work together.
- Parents are very supportive of the school's work and the improvements since the previous inspection. They feel fully consulted and report their high levels of satisfaction with the quality of education and care provided. They are also very positive about the guidance they receive from the school to help them support their children's reading, homework, personal development and safety.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes in teachers in key stage 2, but leaders and new teachers have confidently managed these developments and the quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 is good.
- Leaders and governors hold very accurate views about the strengths of the school's performance and this provides them with the clarity they need to identify remaining areas that require development. As a result, their strategic improvement work is effective and arrangements for checking on its progress are robust and involve all staff and governors.
- Leaders' views about the quality of teaching are accurate and contribute to effective improvement work. Leaders visit lessons regularly, meet with teachers to discuss pupils' progress and look at their work. They use their findings to provide effective support or challenge and staff receive effective, professional development. One example is the way in which teachers and leaders have improved their confidence in delivering the new national curriculum and their development of the required higher-level subject knowledge.
- Procedures for the performance management of staff are rigorous and continue to drive improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Since the previous inspection, pay awards and targets have become closely linked to the priorities of the school improvement plan and salary increases reflect the improvement in teaching quality. Teachers and leaders provide robust evidence of improvement prior to pay decisions and governors take their role in this work very seriously.
- All teaching staff willingly take on different leadership responsibilities and they do so very effectively. They receive high-quality training and are skilled in judging the effect of their work on pupils' progress. They work very effectively as a team in order to agree on ways to further improve the quality of teaching and pupils' personal development, and they share practice with other schools in order to improve the accuracy of assessment of work for all ages of pupils including in the early years.

- Target-setting arrangements for pupils' progress and standards of attainment are effective. Academic targets are typically high but realistic for each child, and leaders make regular checks to help all pupils stay on track. These arrangements are effective because they result in pupils getting the right help when they need it, particularly those who are being supported to catch up or others who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders have made good use of pupil premium funding and disadvantaged pupils are now making similar progress to other pupils nationally. This has been especially so in writing and mathematics, but more recently teachers and leaders have concentrated on helping some disadvantaged pupils overcome the difficulties they have found in their development of reading skills. They are now making good progress in reading as well because of the effective help which has been organised for them.
- Leaders make effective use of additional funding to support the improvement of sports teaching and pupils' participation in competitive activities. The school is a member of the local Redbourne school sports fellowship and teachers have been trained to deliver higher-quality sports education by effective coaches. Spending has been organised to support pupils in swimming, tag rugby, cricket, gymnastics, netball, canoeing, rafting, high ropes, archery and quad biking. The school has also improved its provision for indoor athletics. As a consequence of these successful developments, far more pupils are regularly active in competitive sports and teams.
- The curriculum has been improved since the previous inspection, particularly in the way it supports pupils' learning and skills across a wide range of subjects. Major improvements have been made to the quality of pupils' handwriting and written skills across all ages and classes, and there has been a secure improvement in the development of applied mathematical skills. Subject leaders have also improved the quality of planning to make sure work is sufficiently demanding in reading, music, art, sciences, history, geography, languages, religious education and outdoor skills through the forest school. The curriculum also supports pupils' exceptional development of personal values, which include kindness, tolerance, unity, cooperation, freedom, patience, humour and perseverance, owing to the way these concepts are taught and the highly effective assembly programme. As a result of these improvements, the curriculum supports pupils' outstanding personal development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Pupils can explain the meaning and importance of their school's values and also use them every day to reflect on their learning and lives. Effective assemblies, curriculum strengths and extra-curricular activities including trips and sports, all contribute to their high levels of personal development and respect for one another. Their education makes them aware of and respectful towards different cultures and beliefs within their country, as well as developing their own self-respect.
- The local authority has provided a careful balance between support and challenge to the school. Advisers, including the effective school improvement partner, have assessed the school's performance accurately and have offered effective recommendations to help leaders improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

Governance of the school

- Governors make an effective contribution to the leadership of the school. They are committed, experienced and receive effective training to help them carry out their work. They have an accurate view of the school's performance because they visit regularly, attend all meetings, work alongside leaders with different responsibilities and are involved in the arrangements to monitor improvements. Consequently, they are able to hold leaders to account for their work and offer effective support.
- Governors meet all their statutory duties, including making sure that pupils are kept safe and protected, and they work closely with leaders to see that safeguarding arrangements are effective at all times.
- Governors are vigilant in their performance management work and pay arrangements for teachers. They ensure that all pay awards are checked carefully and supported by detailed, convincing evidence.
- Governors ensure that the school's budget is used effectively. They take expert advice from an external adviser on this matter and work constructively with the headteacher. They hold leaders to account over the ways in which additional funding is used to help more pupils take part in sports and to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, governors and staff are suitably trained to fulfil their safeguarding roles and leaders regularly check on the effectiveness of staff awareness. Staff training includes the full range of safeguarding areas, including arrangements to protect children from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. These arrangements are also reported effectively to parents, who have full confidence in the school's work.
- Any concerns about the safeguarding and welfare of children are recorded accurately and in a timely manner and reported to the appropriate school leaders, who take appropriate action. Record-keeping is accurate and leaders are able to act well on their knowledge of children in order to arrange the right help for them.
- Any referrals about safeguarding made to local authorities and other appropriate agencies are carried out quickly and effectively.
- All checks on the suitability of people to visit the school or be employed as members or staff are fully in place. The recruitment of staff is also safely managed and senior leaders and governors are suitably trained in this area.
- Access to the school premises and site is secure and signing in arrangements are very thorough. There are strict controls on the use of mobile phones and other devices by staff and all visitors.
- The school's safeguarding policy is compliant with national requirements.
- As a result of their effective safeguarding work, staff and governors have secured a highly vigilant culture at the school where children are continually protected from risk.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is now good for pupils of all age groups and classes within the school. Despite changes in key stage 2 staffing since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has been improved in Years 3 and 4, owing to effective recruitment and the successful work of new staff.
- Teachers make good use of the learning environments, including the extensive school grounds and forest school areas, in order to engage pupils' interest. Classrooms are well decorated with attractive displays of pupils' work and helpful reminders about spelling, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary and mathematical rules and tables.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use it to organise work and activities, which are suitably challenging for pupils of different abilities and ages. As a result, pupils are supported to learn well in lessons. This is a significant strength for the school because pupils are taught in mixed-year groups in key stages 1 and 2. One good example was in a writing lesson, where all pupils received appropriate levels of work and the teacher and teaching assistant provided highly effective support to help them improve the quality of their descriptive writing skills by choosing powerful adverbs and adjectives.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are exceptionally positive. Teachers demonstrate great enthusiasm to pupils and, although work is demanding, their patient encouragement inspires the pupils to always try their best. As a result, pupils are increasingly confident and do not give up.
- Teachers' use of questioning is effective. They question pupils to assess their understanding and challenge them to make skilful use of their knowledge. One example was in a history lesson. Effective questioning by the teacher led to pupils sharing their understanding of the events and people involved in the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb and treasure. Consequently, they were able to explain the importance of Howard Carter's archaeological skills and accurately assess the role played by his wealthy patron Lord Carnarvon.
- Teaching assistants are effective. They receive good-quality professional development opportunities and work closely with teachers to plan their support work and decide how best to support the pupils they work with, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are skilled in discussing pupils' learning with them in order to help them develop their understanding and knowledge. As a result of this help, those pupils who they support are learning well.
- Homework is used effectively to support learning. Pupils are provided with regular assignments appropriate to their age, including the learning of values. They complete written homework in their learning logs and they take great care to present their work well. Parents are pleased with the support they receive to help their children to read well at home.
- Reading is well taught. Pupils are helped to securely develop their phonics knowledge in the early years. In key stages 1 and 2, their comprehension skills help them to develop the ability to summarise the main characters of a story or the plot itself. They can evaluate characters and stories by considering the way writers have presented them or the language they have used. They are helped to enjoy regular reading

through an effective scheme, which provides them with suitably challenging and interesting books. Arrangements to provide pupils with additional help to catch up when their reading needs improvement are effective.

- Writing is taught well, which represents an important improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching has concentrated on accurate handwriting in the early years and the development of extended writing skills in key stages 1 and 2. As a result, the youngest pupils are now forming their letters with greater accuracy while the older pupils write with purpose across a wide range of subjects. Spelling is taught effectively and grammar is well developed. Written work is effective in history, religious education, English and science.
- Mathematics is taught effectively and pupils make good progress as a result. Younger pupils learn their number rules and tables effectively. As a result, all pupils have effective knowledge of number work and the teaching of calculation skills has become more successful. When introducing new concepts and problem-solving work in mathematics, teachers help pupils to think about number rules before setting more complicated calculations. One example was in a lesson about using factorisation to solve complicated word problems. As a result of the teacher's demonstration and questioning, pupils were able to offer several different approaches to tackling difficult work.
- Although progress is now good in mathematics, some pupils do not learn as well as they are capable of. Some work and activities do not allow them to use their knowledge as thoroughly as they are able. They are not able to move on to the most challenging activities, and spend too long on work which is too easy.
- Teaching is effective in a large number of subjects. These include history, geography, religious education, sciences, art, music, outdoor bush craft skills and languages, including German and French. Pupils make effective gains in knowledge and they learn to use it skilfully across different subjects. One example was in key stage 1 science where pupils were learning about the biology of polar animals and how their living conditions are affected by different factors such as temperature, food supply and fitness. While they studied these areas in science lessons, pupils were also taught about polar exploration in history and climatic conditions in geography. As a result, they understood the living conditions of the polar region more thoroughly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very happy, polite and considerate to one another and offer the same respect to all staff and visitors. They have a very mature acceptance of the school's values and follow them with pride. One example was in a forest school lesson where the pupils were eager to each be responsible for taking on the character of a school value such as, patience, tolerance or cooperation. All pupils follow the values system, which guides them to achieve their best.
- Pupils make a significant contribution to the life of the school. One example is their active work through the respected school parliament, which is a fully elected body. It decides democratically on the organisation of breaktime activities, help for the

youngest pupils, healthy snack arrangements and charity work. Pupils can explain what democracy is and how they have made conditions better in their school as a result of the parliament. They enjoy meeting with school leaders to carry out their work and discuss the future of the school.

- Pupils are very active in helping others through charity and community work. They actively support the MacMillan Cancer Fund, Comic Relief and a women's refuge.
- Around school and in lessons, pupils offer each other the highest levels of encouragement and cooperation. They are very patient and considerate when working together and listen politely to what others say. One example was in an early years phonics lesson when children were asked to work in pairs and listen to their partner as they sounded new words. They were very careful in their listening work and patiently corrected each other until their sounding was accurate.
- Pupils are supported to develop their confidence and abilities in public performance, particularly in music. They learn instruments from an early age and they are very proud of their achievements.
- All staff and governors make sure children are safe and free from harm in school. Parents have total confidence in the school's work and appreciate the advice they are given to help them keep their children safe. Parents report that they can approach the school with any problem and it will be addressed effectively.
- Pupils report that bullying is extremely rare and should it happen, the school deals with it decisively and quickly, once it is reported. There have been very few cases in the period since the previous inspection.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe and free from harm when using information and communication technology are highly effective. Pupils are highly articulate about the potential risks when using the internet, email, computer games and age-appropriate social media, and how to avoid them.
- Pupils are very well educated in staying healthy. They are very active in many different sports and are given age-appropriate advice about relationships and how to eat healthily. They are provided with a balanced lunch menu and they receive healthy snacks at breaktimes. Their understanding of basic safety in field cooking and camping skills is being developed effectively through the forest school curriculum.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff, governors and parents work together to encourage very high expectations for behaviour, and pupils respond very well. The youngest in the early years are quickly helped to settle in and learn how to notice the needs of others and share. In other classes, all pupils demonstrate a highly articulate understanding of the meaning and value of good behaviour and hard work.
- The vast majority of parents agree that the school ensures behaviour is of the highest standard and that it is promoted well.
- Pupils' attitudes in lessons are exceptionally positive and they are totally committed to learning well and succeeding. They are curious, enthusiastic and have the resilience not to give up easily. They take great pride in the quality of their draft work, subject

books and learning logs.

- Pupils' conduct around school is also exceptional. They move around safely and sensibly and are always courteous and considerate. They wait their turn in the lunch queue and eat their food carefully. During lunchtimes and break, they thoroughly and safely enjoy the many well-supervised physical games including skipping and ball games, and they organise some of these with teachers.
- Pupils are particularly respectful of the school buildings and large grounds. They do not drop litter; they look after their play equipment and they take care of the trees in the forest school area.
- Attendance is above average and rising. Persistent absence has been reduced. The attendance of small numbers of disadvantaged pupils and others whose attendance has been lower in the past is rising. All staff and governors work effectively to explain the importance of high attendance, and this approach is successful.
- There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions in recent years, which reflects the very high standards of behaviour and personal development of the children.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- There has been a significant improvement in pupils' achievement since the previous inspection and pupils are now making good progress in the different year groups and key stages of the school. Good teaching is helping them to develop their knowledge and skills very securely in a wide range of subjects, which include English, mathematics, sciences, art, history, geography, music, physical education and languages, such as German and French.
- Children make a secure start in school from the point at which they join the early years. Most children currently in the school joined with knowledge, skills and personal development that were typical for their age, although some had slightly lower starting points in reading and writing. However, effective teaching has quickly helped the children succeed in these areas. Children's work and the school's accurate assessment records indicate that the very large majority will reach a good level of development and exceed the school's summer 2016 result of 77%, which was also higher than national results.
- Pupils' development of phonics knowledge is good. In recent years, the proportions of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics have risen steadily. In 2016, 80% achieved the standard, which was similar to the national result. Teaching is effective and the great majority of the youngest pupils and children use their phonics knowledge skilfully. Children in the current Reception Year are making good progress and the school's assessment records and lesson observations demonstrate that there are no significant gaps between different groups of pupils.
- The progress of pupils currently in key stage 1 is good. Standards rose firmly between 2014 and 2015, especially in the proportions achieving higher standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, which represented good progress from their starting points in the early years. In 2016, standards were also above national results and were highest in reading. Current work and accurate assessment records show that Years 1 and 2 are making good progress and standards are rising in writing and mathematics.

- The progress of pupils currently in key stage 2 is also good. Reading has remained a strength since the previous inspection and standards are above average in Years 3 and 4. The school's assessment records, pupils' work and visits to lessons show that pupils are making good progress in writing and mathematics and standards are at least average or higher for their different ages. However, pupils' work in mathematics shows that some are not achieving the highest levels of knowledge they are capable of because they are sometimes set work that does not allow them to master their skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. There are very few disadvantaged pupils currently attending the school and this makes meaningful comparison with national results difficult. However, they are making good progress from their individual starting points, according to information from the school's assessment records and their work in most subjects, including writing and mathematics. Their progress in reading is now also good. This represents an important improvement on past results because in recent years in key stage 1, their progress from their different starting points showed that they were not catching up with others nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress when compared with other pupils with similar starting points. This is because of their teachers' accurate assessment and the well-organised support they receive in order to help them achieve well in lessons. Current support for reading is helping them improve their knowledge and use of phonics and, as a result, their progress is improving steadily.
- The most able pupils are making good progress. They are making their best progress in reading, writing, arts, history, geography, sciences and subjects that help them develop their communication skills, including in written work. Their progress is good in mathematics, but they sometimes receive work which does not help them use their knowledge to develop their skills as thoroughly as they are able to.
- Pupils who have started different key stages and classes with lower attainment are being given effective support to help them catch up in mathematics, reading and writing. Teachers have correctly focused on areas where pupils need the most help and, as a result, those currently in the school are making good progress and their attainment is rising.

Early years provision

Good

- Effective leadership has ensured that all children make good progress in the different areas of learning, and this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Children enter the Nursery or Reception Year with skills and knowledge which are normally typical for their age, and by the end of their time in the early years they are well prepared for key stage 1. They make good progress by the end of their time in the Reception Year.
- Arrangements for assessing children on entry to the early years are thorough and effective. Parents are invited to meet teachers and bring their children before they join the Nursery or Reception Year. Children are observed and leaders use a range of assessments to identify their starting points. As a result of this accurate assessment work, leaders are able to provide children with well-matched and appropriate play, work and learning activities.

- Target-setting arrangements ensure children receive appropriate challenges for the end of their time in early years, which take into account their starting points. Their progress is checked regularly and the assessment of their work by teachers and assistant staff is effective.
- Activities are interesting and challenging and support the children to think deeply in ways suitable for their age and development. One example was in an astronomy lesson about the movement of planets around the sun. The teacher's discussion and demonstration work supported all of those involved to be able to describe the movement of planets and how the sun provides daytime light to each planet. In another lesson about toy cars, the teacher's questioning supported the children to successfully predict which car would travel the furthest and fastest when moving down a slope.
- The teaching of early handwriting skills has improved significantly because of the careful attention teachers and teaching assistants now give to the accuracy of letter formation and the improvement of motor skills in all pupils when handling their pencils. Consequently, children write more effectively and with greater confidence.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength and has contributed to high results by the end of Year 1. Teachers and teaching assistants use a consistent approach to phonics in Reception Year and Year 1 and, as a result, children are confident and familiar with the teaching methods and make effective gains in the knowledge and skills involved.
- Behaviour is exceptional. Children are quickly helped to learn how to cooperate with one another and become considerate of the needs of others around them. This makes a significant contribution to their personal development.

School details

Unique reference number	109471
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10019589

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Hubbard
Headteacher	Franziska Murray
Telephone number	01234 768 269
Website	www.sheltonandsouthillschool.co.uk
Email address	sheltonoffice@sheltonandsouthillschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 December 2014

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average primary school. As a consequence, the size of some year groups is very small.
- The school is federated with Southill Lower School and the headteacher leads both schools. There is one governing body for both schools in the federation.
- The school has experienced two changes in key stage 2 teachers since its previous inspection.
- Children in the early years start in the Nursery class and most then move on to a full-time Reception class.
- Pupils move on to their next school at the end of Year 4.
- Most pupils are White British and the proportion that speak English as a foreign language is well below average.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (those supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average and currently there are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets all requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection gathered evidence from lessons covering all classes within the school, some of which were visited jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of information and school documents, including its self-evaluation records, improvement plans, curriculum information and the school values system, checks on the quality of teaching, details of governors' work and attendance records.
- The inspector looked closely at the school's procedures, policies and records for the safeguarding of children. They were discussed with staff, the headteacher and governors.
- The inspector looked at work from each year group and listened to children read. The school's records for pupil assessment and progress were also looked at.
- Meetings were held with various teachers and support staff, the headteacher, subject leaders and the governing body. The inspector held a telephone meeting with the school's improvement partner who is engaged by the local authority.
- Other meetings were held to discuss the progress of children, assessment records and the improvement of the school since its previous inspection, the quality of teaching and the performance management of staff.
- Meetings were held with the school council and pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2, to discuss their experiences at the school.
- The inspector attended an assembly and observed pupils at breaktimes and in the lunch hall.
- The inspector met with parents at the start of the first day of the inspection. He also took account of 12 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and written comments. There were no questionnaires completed by staff. The inspector met with all teachers to discuss their experiences at the school and their training.

Inspection team

David Turner, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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