

Inspection of a good school: Potton Lower School

Everton Road, Potton, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2PB

Inspection dates:

11–12 March 2020

Outcome

Potton Lower School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Potton Lower School is a happy place to learn and work. Pupils flourish socially and academically. They are well behaved and enjoy coming to school. The school's motto, 'Every Child Can', permeates through all aspects of everyday life.

The executive headteacher and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. There is a strong focus on teaching pupils core values, such as tolerance and respect. Pupils are able to articulate clearly how they are trying to demonstrate this month's value, 'thoughtfulness', in their interactions with each other and in their behaviour around school.

Pupils are sociable, friendly and articulate. They enjoy talking to visitors about their school life and do so sensibly. They are motivated to do well. They quickly develop a love of reading and are very enthusiastic about sport and art. Pupils work hard most of the time, although some pupils in Year 3 do not take enough care to present their work neatly.

Most parents are very happy with the school. They make complimentary comments about school life, especially regarding the school's caring ethos and its rich curriculum. One parent exemplified this, writing, 'Both my child and I are very happy with the school...She loves her teachers, has been challenged and enjoys all the extra-curricular and the topic-based activities she gets to do.'

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

Leaders and governors work together well. They have built a strong team of staff who share their high ambitions for pupils.

Staff have planned a coherent and consistent approach to the curriculum, determining what pupils should learn across the school. There have been many helpful developments in the current year, such as pupils being given more opportunities to apply their knowledge to practical tasks in mathematics.

Most teachers follow curriculum plans carefully. Consequently, pupils make good progress in developing new skills and knowledge in the different subjects they study. There are, however, some inconsistencies in Year 3. Here, teachers do not expect enough of their pupils. They do not encourage them to produce the high-quality work they are capable of. Leaders have identified this as an area to improve and have made a start on doing so.

Reading is taught well. Pupils quickly develop a love of reading. All staff are well trained in how to teach reading. They check carefully the progress pupils make through the well-planned phonics programme. Pupils read often to adults at school and at home. Occasionally, pupils read books in school that are not well matched to their ability. This slows the pace at which they build their skills.

Children settle well into the early years. Children in the Reception Year classes are excited about learning phonics. Staff have high expectations of what children can do. They ensure that learning builds on what children already know. Children grasp new ideas quickly because staff explain them well. They ask demanding questions to challenge children's thinking.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Leaders have effective procedures for identifying pupils' needs. These include visiting pre-schools to see what extra help children may need when they start school. Leaders work effectively with teachers to provide work that is well matched to the pupils' needs.

The school has well-planned provision to help pupils become good citizens. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities. Pupil voice is especially well established through the 'Voice and Values' committee. This group contributes well to school improvement.

Pupils' learning is enriched enormously through trips and visits. The science week that was taking place during the inspection, for example, gave pupils plentiful opportunities to learn skills in practical activities, such as how to make a bath-bomb. Sport and residential trips help pupils to build their resilience and perseverance.

Staff feel valued and supported by leaders. They appreciate the care that leaders have for their workload and well-being.

Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education. Leaders make sure that the end points of the curriculum closely match the starting points of the adjoining middle school's curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff and governors receive regular training and updates around safeguarding. Staff are vigilant. They know the signs and symptoms that should cause them to be concerned about a pupil's well-being. Leaders make timely referrals to the local authority. They work closely with external agencies when concerns about pupils' safety arise.

The curriculum focuses well on helping pupils to learn how to stay safe, including when

online. Pupils talk knowledgeably about how the school helps them to make sensible choices when facing a problem.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers in Year 3 do not expect enough of pupils. This slows the rate at which pupils learn. Leaders need to ensure that teachers in Year 3 have the same high expectations that are evident elsewhere in the school.
- The books that some pupils read do not match the sounds they are learning in class. This means they do not get enough opportunities to apply their new learning when reading. Leaders must ensure that the books pupils read are closely matched to the sounds they have learned in class.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 7 June 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil

premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	109475
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10121464
Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Pryer
Headteacher	Cathy Smart
Website	www.pottonfederation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Potton Lower School is a larger-than-average-sized first school that takes pupils until the end of Year 4. There are 10 classes. Children in the early years are taught in two single-age Reception Year classes.
- The school is federated with Potton Middle School and shares the same executive headteacher and governing body.

Information about this inspection

- I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders and other staff. I also met with representatives from the governing body and an external support consultant.
- I spoke with several groups of pupils at different times to gather their views of school. I also heard pupils reading to members of staff.
- I considered the school's approaches to safeguarding by talking to staff and pupils and reviewing documentation. Other school documents I scrutinised included planning and monitoring documents, the school's development plan, and records relating to behaviour and attendance.

- I looked at the 50 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, including written comments. I also considered the 28 responses to the staff survey.
- I did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and science. I observed lessons in these subjects with the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher or subject leader. I also held meetings with teachers, curriculum leaders and pupils. I looked at a range of pupils’ work in these subjects.

Inspection team

Mike Capper, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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