

Inspection of a good school: Southill Lower School

School Lane, Southill, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 9JA

Inspection date: 1 July 2021

Outcome

Southill Lower School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Southill are safe, secure and happy. Classrooms and corridors are filled with laughter. Relationships between pupils are strong. They get on well with each other and display courtesy, respect and kindness.

Pupils say they feel happy at school because leaders have created a culture where everyone cares for each other. Staff know every pupil well. They know what makes them happy, anxious or worried. This means that every pupil can be supported quickly and consistently.

Pupils say that behaviour is good. Teachers have taught pupils to understand what bullying is. Pupils say there is no bullying at school. They get excited in lessons because learning is interesting. Pupils respect each other and behave in such a way that everyone can learn without being disrupted.

Pupils' learning is well supported by all staff. Within the mixed-age classes pupils regularly receive specific age-appropriate learning in small groups. Teachers and teaching assistants all deliver a curriculum that is helping pupils to know and remember more.

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

Leaders have identified key priorities and taken action to make the school better. The school has been through some challenging years, with high staff turnover. Leaders, including governors, have acted decisively to provide a stable staff team. They have also developed effective links with a partner school to share best practice. Provision now meets the needs of all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Strategies to support pupils with SEND include greater use of practical

resources, visual prompts and teaching concepts before the whole-class lesson for familiarity.

The curriculum is carefully planned. Teachers adapt their plans so younger and older pupils receive learning that is appropriate for their age. The design of the curriculum is ambitious and well sequenced. Curriculum plans support pupils to become secure with subject-specific knowledge. Leaders make sure that teachers check what pupils know and can do. They use this information to plan and support pupils with their learning. Accurate checking of pupils' knowledge means that the curriculum can be adapted to meet the individual needs of pupils.

Some aspects of the curriculum do not provide opportunities for pupils to apply what they learn in ways which would really challenge pupils to think hard. Some pupils could achieve at an even higher level.

The reading curriculum is carefully planned, from Nursery to Year 4. Leaders have high expectations for what letter sounds pupils should know at different points in the year. Leaders track reading progress meticulously in the early years and continue this for any pupils who may find reading more challenging. Pupils say that they enjoy reading because they have been taught how to read fluently. Staff use skilful questioning to embed pupils' comprehension of vocabulary. This helps pupils to understand what they are reading.

Leaders have developed a positive reading culture across the school. Staff are passionate about reading and demonstrate how to read with expression. One pupil said that reading 'takes me away in my head'. Another commented that, 'reading calms me down.'

Leaders have delivered high quality training so that all staff have the highest expectations for pupils. Staff explain what good behaviour looks like. Pupils understand how they are expected to behave and follow the school rules.

The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum explicitly teaches pupils about bullying and relationships. This supports pupils in talking confidently about different types of bullying. One pupil informed an inspector that you can have 'emotional, physical, verbal and virtual bullying, but we don't have any here'.

Pupils enjoy the range of clubs that the school offers, including hockey, dance, mindfulness, gardening, 'chill out' and history. Leaders are aware of the need to teach pupils about diversity through religious education (RE).

Leaders and staff build strong relationships with parents by getting to know families well. Leaders and staff have helped to develop a strong sense of community with parents. Parents' responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire reflect how happy parents are with the school, with 100% recommending it to other parents.

Governance of the school is a strength. Governors bring a range of expertise to their role, including data analysis and knowledge about effective safeguarding. Governors support leaders well. Governors hold leaders to account for the school's academic and financial performance. They have a clear understanding of the curriculum and of how well pupils

are doing. They have played an important role in developing links with a partner school. This has helped with the sharing of resources and staff training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders who are in charge of safeguarding take their roles seriously. They make sure all staff are appropriately trained and know how to act if they have a concern. Leaders have clear systems in place to record any potential incidents. These are reviewed by relevant staff on a regular basis. Ongoing communication between staff and designated safeguarding leaders keeps pupils safe. All staff are vigilant and understand that everyone is responsible for safeguarding, not just leaders.

The executive headteacher is supported by a named safeguarding governor, who has a thorough understanding of safeguarding procedures.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders provide a curriculum that supports pupils' learning. However, this needs to be reviewed and refined so that teachers deliver subject content precisely matched to all pupils' needs, particularly those who are ready to apply knowledge in more complex ways. Teachers need to check what pupils know and do not know so that the next steps of learning can be carefully chosen.

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 outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that 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 in March 2011.

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 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.

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 [here](#).

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	109481
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10193992
Type of school	Lower
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Caroline Coombs
Headteacher	James Adkins (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.southilllower.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 March 2011, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The school caters for pupils in three mixed-aged classes.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors did deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and RE. They spoke to leaders about the curriculum and met with teachers from the lessons visited. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.

- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and members of the local governing body. They spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the single central record and spoke to leaders, teachers, governors and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 14 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 14 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 15 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Milligan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Maureen Su

Her Majesty's Inspector

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