

# Inspection of Shackleton Primary School

Pearcey Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 9LZ

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Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2021

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Shackleton Primary has been through challenging times since the predecessor school was judged to be good in 2013. There have been many changes of leadership, both within the school and the wider multi-academy trust. This caused instability and unhappiness over several years.

All that has changed. The school and trust have had strong and secure leadership for the last two years. The school has improved quickly since then. Leaders have high expectations both for and of pupils. Pupils rise to these expectations and learn the curriculum well.

The school has a 'buzz'. There is a feeling that something interesting is going on from the moment you walk through the door. Classrooms and corridors are clean, bright and welcoming.

Shackleton is a vibrant and welcoming school. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and, in many cases, from other countries too. Many pupils speak languages other than English. The school is a melting pot, where individual differences are valued and celebrated.

Pupils feel happy and safe. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils know that they can talk to the adults in school and that they will help them. Bullying does not happen very often, but it is taken seriously when it does.

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

Leaders have a strong shared vision. The school is in a deprived area where many families live in poverty. Leaders refuse to accept this as an excuse for underachievement. They are determined that pupils will do as well as they possibly can. They have a strong belief in the power of education to change pupils' lives. This has had a big impact on how quickly the school has improved, and how much it is continuing to improve.

Leaders see teaching pupils to read as their primary purpose. They recognise fully the role reading plays in enabling pupils to access later learning. The school's chosen phonics programme is well established. The children who have just started in the Reception classes already know and remember the sounds that they have been taught.

Leaders have taken a range of actions to encourage pupils to develop a love of reading. For example, attractive 'reading spaces' have been set up around the school to encourage pupils to sit and enjoy a book. Staff read to pupils daily in 'DEAL' (drop everything and listen) time. Staff encourage pupils to read at home as much as possible.

The school's curriculum is well planned and well sequenced. Leaders and staff have thought carefully about the small steps of learning that pupils need to make in each subject. For example, in personal, social and health education (PSHE), the curriculum is designed effectively so that pupils develop well as active citizens in a diverse community. Across the full range of subjects, pupils are given plentiful opportunities to revisit and practise what they have been taught, so that they remember it for a long time.

The curriculum is delivered well by skilled staff. Classrooms are calm and orderly places where pupils are able to learn. However, there is a small amount of variability in how well the curriculum is delivered. Leaders are aware of this and are taking steps to address it.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is particularly strong. Leaders know pupils with SEND exceptionally well. Leaders and staff identify the barriers that make it more difficult for pupils to make progress in learning the curriculum. They put the right support in place to enable them to do so.

This is also the case for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Many pupils join the school at the earliest stages of learning to speak English. Leaders and staff identify pupils' needs very quickly. They waste no time in getting pupils started with learning language. This fits well with the strong focus on developing pupils' vocabulary that is a feature of the curriculum in all subjects.

Pupils' attendance has been too low for the last few years. Although there have been significant improvements for some individual pupils, this continues to be the case. Leaders do a lot to encourage good attendance and to deter unnecessary absence. However, there are still too many pupils who are frequently absent and without good reason. This needs to change.

Leaders have focused well on developing the curriculum so that it is broad, interesting and challenging. The wider curriculum offers a range of other opportunities, such as clubs and educational visits, although these have been stalled until recently due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic restrictions. There is more work to do to develop the richness of the broader curriculum.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is leaders' top priority. Staff receive training regularly to keep them up to date with current guidance. Staff are vigilant to the possibility of abuse and neglect. They report their concerns promptly and leaders respond to these appropriately.

Leaders follow up on reported concerns tenaciously, where necessary. If they are not satisfied with the responses they receive from other agencies, they take matters further. Leaders see it as their job to be pupils' protectors and to 'fight their corner'.

They go above and beyond what is typical to help and support vulnerable pupils and their families.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Absence has been too high for too long for some pupils. Although most pupils attend regularly and on time, a sizeable group of pupils do not. These pupils miss parts of the curriculum being delivered. Leaders should continue to find ways to lower absence overall and particularly for pupils with the most frequent absences.
- There is a very small amount of weaker teaching, where the curriculum is not delivered as well as it is in the rest of the school. Where this is the case, pupils do not behave as well or make as much progress as they do in other classes. Leaders should continue to tackle weaker teaching so that the curriculum is delivered well, in all classes and all subjects, throughout the school.
- The school's wider curriculum offer is limited. Opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests have not been explored fully. Leaders should develop a wide, rich set of experiences for pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged pupils, to benefit from.

## 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 Ofsted 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.

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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144545
<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	10200449
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	454
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Sam Farmer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andy George
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.shackletonprimary.co.uk">www.shackletonprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Shackleton Primary School converted to become an academy school in September 2017. When its predecessor school, also Shackleton Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of Heart Academies Trust and is sponsored by The Harpur Trust.
- There have been several changes of headteacher since the predecessor school was inspected in December 2013. The current headteacher took up his post in September 2019.
- The leadership of Heart Academies Trust has also changed. The current chair of the trust took up his post early in 2019 and the chief executive officer was appointed shortly afterwards.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with: the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders; the chief executive officer and the school improvement director for the multi-academy trust; groups of pupils and staff; and parents as they brought their children to school. The lead inspector held an online meeting with a group of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, English, art, religious education and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- In order to check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks, looked at records of child protection concerns and spoke with parents, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors took into account 140 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey and 45 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors also noted the eight free-text comments made by parents. There were too few responses to Ofsted Parent View for results to be available.

## Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

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