

# Inspection of Shortstown Primary School

Beauvais Square, Shortstown, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK42 0GS

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Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 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?**

This is a welcoming school. Pupils thrive in the caring and supportive atmosphere. Pupils want to learn and they attend school regularly.

Many pupils have significant barriers to learning, including joining the school with little understanding of English. Pupils appreciate that leaders and staff help them to be successful both academically and with their personal development.

Pupils understand how they are expected to behave. Pupils like and respect the adults in the school. Consequently, they follow instructions and routines well. Playtimes are happy and social occasions. Pupils are cheerful and well-mannered. They were keen to meet with inspectors and help guide them around the school.

Pupils feel safe. They value the weekly safeguarding assemblies when they learn how to keep themselves from harm. Pupils checked that inspectors were wearing the green coloured lanyards which meant it was safe to talk with them without a member of staff nearby. Pupils say that there is a small amount of bullying; however, teachers are good at resolving it.

Pupils enjoy the before- and after-school clubs that have recently restarted. They take seriously the responsibility of roles such as being a school councillor or a play leader. They enjoy helping with the smooth running of the school.

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

Since all pupils returned to school following the COVID-19 restrictions, leaders have focused on helping pupils to catch up in English and mathematics. In these subjects, curriculum plans set out clearly the knowledge, concepts and vocabulary that pupils need to learn.

Leaders have made sure that pupils continue to receive a broad education. In most subjects, such as physical education (PE), religious education (RE), music, and computing, the teaching plans are well planned and taught. Plans in other subjects such as science, history and art are in place, but are not as consistent or clear. They do not set out, in order, what teachers will teach and when, so that pupils can build on their knowledge, skills and understanding over time.

The teaching of reading is important in this school. Leaders recognise it helps pupils to succeed in other subjects. Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained to teach phonics. Most pupils are gaining the skills they need to become confident and fluent readers. Any pupils who begin to fall behind are given extra support to help them to catch up quickly. In all year groups, pupils practise their reading regularly and enjoy class story times.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum develops pupils' vocabulary and use of language. Teaching staff in all year groups introduce and model important vocabulary linked to subjects and topics. For example, in a literacy lesson, pupils in Year 2 remembered what 'shuffling' and 'roaming' meant as they studied 'The Traction Man' text. Year 6 pupils used terms such as 'atrium' and 'oxygenated blood' correctly, to describe the human heart.

Likewise, in the pre-school and Reception classes, children have regular opportunities to learn new words and talk in sentences through hearing stories, rhymes, and songs. In early years, staff carefully plan activities so that children learn and remember early reading and mathematical skills. Children enjoy learning about others and the world around them. While the early years curriculum is well planned, leaders have not thought carefully enough about how the early years curriculum prepares children for Year 1. In the same way, subject leaders across the school do not know enough about how their subjects are planned and taught in the early years.

Leaders have high ambitions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' needs are identified quickly. Teachers adapt the approaches to learning well so that pupils with SEND fully participate in lessons and access the same curriculum as other pupils.

Leaders and staff teach pupils to be respectful to others and keep trying, even when their learning gets tricky. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils like to help each other, especially when someone is new to the school.

Leaders provide many opportunities to support pupils' personal development and encourage them to be active and considerate citizens. During the inspection, a group of pupils met with a local politician to discuss climate change. Pupils confidently shared their work to promote walking and cycling to school.

Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. This puts them in a strong position to provide leaders with effective support and challenge. The trust provides training for leaders and staff to improve the quality of education. Additionally, there are opportunities for leaders and staff to work with other schools in the trust to develop and share effective practice.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff receive regular, high-quality training, including around particular issues that are present in the local community. Staff know how to report any concerns they have about pupils. They do this confidently and quickly. Leaders know which pupils need extra support. Leaders take prompt action and work positively with other professionals so that pupils receive the help they need.

Governors give safeguarding a high priority. They make regular checks on the school's systems to ensure that all pupils are safe.

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

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

- The curriculum plans for science and some foundation subjects do not contain enough detail for teachers to know what pupils need to learn and the order in which they must learn it. Lessons do not reliably build on what pupils already know and can do. Leaders must make sure that the curriculum plans for all subjects are well sequenced and consistently followed by staff.
- Curriculum leadership teams work together effectively to develop and improve the curriculum of their subjects across the school. However, leaders, including in early years, do not consider enough how subjects are taught across all phases. This means that children in the early years are not prepared for Year 1 as well as they should be. Equally, curriculum leaders do not know or understand how their subject is taught in early years. Curriculum leadership teams need to work more closely with early years staff to increase their understanding and strengthen curriculum links between early years, key stage 1, and key stage 2.
- The transitional arrangements were used for this inspection to confirm that pupils benefit from a good quality education.

## 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>	144546
<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	10200444
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	460
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Hoare
<b>Headteacher</b>	Denise Cottam
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.shortstownprimary.co.uk">www.shortstownprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- This is the first section 5 inspection since Shortstown Primary School converted to become an academy on 1 June 2017. When its predecessor school, Shortstown Lower School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The predecessor school was located on a different site and provided education for pupils from four to nine years old. The predecessor school moved to the current location in September 2013. Over time, the school has expanded to a larger-than-average-sized primary school, providing education for two- to 11-year-olds.
- The school is part of Heart Academies Trust and is sponsored by The Harpur Trust.
- The school has a pre-school that provides for funded two-year-olds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND and those with an education, health and care plan are both above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.

## 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 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding leader, the special educational needs coordinator, and one of the assistant headteachers, who is also the early years leader. Inspectors also held meetings with the pre-school manager, the office manager, and several teachers and teaching assistants to discuss the impact of the support they receive from leaders.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, one of whom is the vice-chair of the local advisory board. Additionally, the lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and the school improvement director from the trust.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, science, history, and art. Inspectors met with curriculum leaders for these subjects, visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils. The lead inspector observed some pupils reading to staff and talked to pupils about their reading habits. Inspectors also checked the curriculum provision and pupils' learning in other subject areas during the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils to seek their views about the school. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at breaktimes. An inspector attended a school assembly.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including the school's own evaluation, improvement plans, curriculum plans, minutes of local advisory board meetings, governors' reports and records about behaviour, safeguarding children and attendance.

Inspectors considered the 35 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 35 responses to Ofsted's free-text system. Inspectors also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. Additionally, inspectors took account of the 37 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the seven responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Short	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lesley Stevens	Ofsted Inspector

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