

Inspection of Sheerhatch Primary School

Willington Road, Cople, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK44 3TH

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy the friendly atmosphere at Sheerhatch Primary School. Across both sites, pupils feel safe and enjoy their learning. Attendance is high. Pupils are keen to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities.

Staff are committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve well. Relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive. This means that pupils learn in a calm and supportive environment. Pupils are attentive in lessons and work together well.

Pupils are confident and have well-developed social skills. They are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. They listen to and respect the opinions of others.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at less structured times. They understand what bullying is and is not. They are confident that if bullying happens, adults will resolve any problems quickly. Parents who responded to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, strongly agree.

Pastoral care for pupils and their families is very strong. Staff go out of their way to support pupils and their families. Parents are overwhelmingly positive. They have appreciated the school's care during COVID-19. One parent commented, 'It may be small, but the school is brilliant at what it does.'

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have successfully improved the quality of education and established a single identity for the school across the two separate sites.

Leaders have designed and implemented a broad and aspirational curriculum for all pupils, based on a clear understanding of pupils' needs. Subject leaders' curriculum thinking identifies what pupils need to know in most subjects and how they build their knowledge and skills from early years through to Year 6 over time.

Pupils enjoy a variety of learning activities which interest them. Teachers explain things well and use a range of activities to check pupils' understanding and help them remember what they have been taught. Pupils are given time to practise and consolidate their learning. However, some teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use what they know to complete more complex tasks.

In some areas, pupils develop subject-specific knowledge very well, for example by presenting scientific information in different ways. In a few subjects, this is less secure. For example, the skills of historical enquiry are not as well developed, so pupils do not deepen their knowledge and understanding as well as they could.

Pupils are confident and enthusiastic readers. There is a well-established and consistent approach to teaching phonics, from the beginning of Reception. However, some adults do not always check the sounds pupils know well enough before they move on. As a result, some early readers do not secure their knowledge of sounds effectively.

Reception Year children settle quickly into learning routines. The school's house system and the school council give pupils a genuine voice in the school. Transitions, particularly from Year 2 into Year 3, are managed effectively. Older pupils are well prepared for secondary school and parents are very positive about their children's levels of confidence. Leaders provide a range of activities beyond the regular curriculum and pupils appreciate the opportunities on offer.

Leaders develop pupils' awareness of difference and diversity. Pupils know and understand the school's values. Leaders ensure that pupils extend their understanding and experience of the world.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Precise support helps pupils access the curriculum in all subjects from their individual starting points. Provision for them is effective and, consequently, pupils with SEND learn and achieve well.

Governors know the community very well and are committed to the school's development. They bring a range of appropriate skills and experiences. External support has helped them develop a sharper understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve.

Staff are proud of the school and are very happy to work there. They say that senior leaders are mindful of their workload and they feel valued and supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff understand their roles and have received up-to-date training. Teachers know their pupils very well and have a detailed understanding of their needs. Adults are vigilant and know what to do to raise any concerns they may have about pupils' welfare. They ensure that vulnerable pupils and families receive the support they need.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. The curriculum teaches pupils how to manage risks. Pupils know how to use the internet safely and report any worrying signs to adults.

Governors monitor safeguarding effectively and ensure that recruitment is managed safely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In teaching phonics, some adults do not consistently check what sounds pupils know before they move learning on. As a result, a few early readers are not able to secure their knowledge of sounds as well as they could. This slows their progress toward becoming fluent readers. Leaders should ensure that there is a consistently sharp focus by all staff on reinforcing the sounds that pupils know before moving on to new learning.
- In a few areas, the curriculum is not designed or implemented as well as it should be. Pupils are not currently developing the subject-specific knowledge and understanding they need in these subjects. Leaders should ensure the quality of subject planning and delivery is fully designed and implemented well across all subjects.

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

Unique reference number	109442
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10200520
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	128
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Siobhan Godden
Headteacher	Helen Ryan
Website	www.sheerhatchprimary.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Sheerhatch Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school operates across two sites approximately a mile apart. One site is in Cople and the other in Willington. Reception Year and key stage 1 pupils are educated on the Willington site. Key stage 2 pupils are educated on the Cople site.

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. The inspection team discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and geography. This included discussions with curriculum leaders, visits to lessons, meetings with staff and pupils and scrutinising pupils' work.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding, school improvement plans, school curriculum planning documents and the school's self-evaluation.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body and the chair of governors. There was a telephone conversation with the local authority school improvement partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's record of employment of staff and met with the designated leader for safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils at play during breaktime and lunchtime and talked to groups of pupils about their school experiences.
- The inspection team considered 42 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, 18 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 57 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including 36 free-text comments.

Inspection team

John Constable, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lynda Walker

Ofsted Inspector

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