

Inspection of Potton Middle School

Mill Lane, Potton, Bedfordshire SG19 2PG

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 April 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade **Good**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that Potton School is a friendly place where everyone is welcome. Pupils enjoy learning and know staff have high expectations of them. Pupils work hard to meet these expectations and so they learn well in their lessons.

Pupils are well cared for by the staff. Pupils like the extra activities, such as monthly reading competitions and sports clubs, that leaders provide. Pupils enjoy studying other faiths and cultures and appreciate the wider programmes in school, such as studying art from around the world. As one pupil commented, 'We live in a Potton bubble; teachers burst the bubble so we can see the outside world.'

Pupils benefit from the leadership roles staff give them. The 'Potton prefect' system helps pupils to develop confidence. Pupils enjoy helping staff, for example by working in the school library.

There is a strong sense of community. Pupils say they feel safe and happy. Bullying rarely happens. Pupils say that their teachers are quick to sort bullying out when it does happen. Pupils behave well. They understand why school values such as honesty and patience are important. Pupils know staff want them to behave well and be kind to each other. Pupils who join the school make friends and quickly settle in.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. In all subjects, leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn and when. Teachers use this logical order to teach important knowledge, so that pupils build on what they have learned before and achieve well. Pupils enjoy the lessons because teachers have planned an interesting curriculum.

Leaders check that staff are teaching the planned curriculum across all subjects. Leaders provide training to ensure staff have the knowledge to teach the curriculum well. In mathematics, teachers are improving their skills to teach subject-specific vocabulary. They support pupils to apply their knowledge and complete work that is more demanding. However, not all teachers are well-equipped and confident to teach the new mathematics curriculum effectively and consistently across all year groups.

Teachers check what pupils have learned. They revisit learning that pupils have not understood. Staff provide effective support to pupils who need extra help; they ensure these pupils catch up quickly. Leaders provide a broad curriculum which stretches pupils to learn more. This prepares pupils well for their next stage of education.

Leaders prioritise the teaching and enjoyment of reading. Pupils read regularly and talk enthusiastically about books they have read, both in school and at home. Staff and pupils read together. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn to read fluently. Staff teach phonics well to pupils who struggle with the early stages of reading. This helps these pupils to become confident with their reading.

The special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) provides regular training for all staff. Staff are confident in identifying pupils who need extra help. Staff meet individual pupils' needs effectively so that pupils with SEND access the curriculum alongside their peers. Staff provide extra support in small groups when necessary.

Pupils behave well in lessons. Pupils understand and follow the rules and routines expected. Leaders have built the behaviour routines around the school values such as respect and patience. Sometimes pupils do not demonstrate the same positive behaviour during their breaktimes and outside of lessons.

Leaders have designed an ambitious personal, social and health education curriculum. It provides opportunities for pupils to learn about healthy living and how to care for their environment. Leaders focus on providing opportunities for pupils to understand the wider world.

There is an effective governance structure across the federation. This gives valuable support to school leaders. Governors ensure they have the information they need to hold school leaders to account for the impact of leaders' actions to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant. Leaders train staff so they can recognise when something is not right. All staff understand how to notify the right people if they have a concern and they report concerns swiftly. Leaders keep comprehensive records, including checks undertaken for the recruitment of suitable staff. Governors monitor safeguarding procedures and ask searching questions of leaders to assure themselves that leaders do all they can to keep pupils safe from harm.

Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils know who to speak to if they have a concern.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have provided training for some staff to teach the new mathematics curriculum. This is not the case for all staff. Leaders should ensure all staff receive

the training they need to deliver the curriculum consistently and confidently so that all pupils across all year groups achieve well in mathematics.

- Some pupils do not behave as well as staff expect during breaktimes and lunchtimes. There are instances of inappropriate language and name-calling which can become routine. Staff need to ensure that all pupils make a clearer link between the school values they are taught and how they apply these values to their behaviour during less structured times of the school day.

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	109676
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10227090
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Hannah Bartram
Headteacher	Charlotte Coppenhall
Website	www.pottonfederation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Potton Middle School is part of the Potton Federation of schools alongside the Potton Lower School. The middle school is due to close from August 2023 and join with the Potton Lower School to form a single primary school.
- Governors have appointed a substantive headteacher from September 2022 to replace the current interim headteacher.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the SENDCo, other leaders and school staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and spoke by telephone with the school improvement partner from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, reading and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also examined the curriculum and books from science.
- Inspectors considered 31 responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors took account of the 25 responses to Ofsted's staff's survey and 43 responses to the pupils' survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation to determine the quality of leadership and management.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding. Inspectors reviewed leaders' records in relation to safeguarding and the employment of staff suitable to work with children.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school.

Inspection team

Diana Osagie, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

James Chester

Her Majesty's Inspector

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