

Inspection of a good school: Shillington Lower School

Greenfields, Shillington, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 3NX

Inspection date:

20 July 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Shillington Lower School are polite and respectful. They get on well with their teachers and enjoy learning. They are calm and focused in lessons and are keen to do their best. Pupils work together and are reflective about what they are learning.

Pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. Pupils understand what bullying is. They remember lessons where they have learned about it. Bullying only happens on rare occasions, and staff deal with concerns effectively. As a result, pupils feel safe at school.

The curriculum content supports pupils to learn about different faiths and festivals, for example Judaism and Chinese New Year. They understand how the beliefs of others may be different from their own. Pupils are taught about differences. Pupils can give examples of books they read in class that teach them about diverse communities. Pupils comment that the story of the gay pride flag is 'inspirational'.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities to develop leadership skills as sports ambassadors and members of the school council. These pupils have responsibility for running activities for other pupils, such as sports clubs and a computer club.

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

Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum. The content is well considered and sets out what pupils will learn in each year group. In a few areas, for example in reading, the curriculum is established and well developed. However, in most subjects, the curriculum has only recently been introduced. A lack of training has led to some variability in teachers' confidence in delivering the curriculum as leaders have planned. In some curriculum areas, teachers do not have the appropriate subject training to check what

pupils know. This means that they do not know where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. Therefore, pupils do not routinely and effectively build on what they have learned before.

Pupils throughout the school learn to read fluently. In early years and key stage 1, the school's chosen programme for teaching early reading, including systematic, synthetic phonics, is working well. Teachers across the school deliver the programme with confidence and expertise. As pupils move through key stage 2, they further develop their love of reading by accessing a range of different books. This also supports pupils to access the rest of the curriculum as books are chosen to help pupils develop their understanding of diversity, culture and difference. Pupils who fall behind are quickly identified and given the support they need to catch up.

While reading is strong in the school, there is variability in how well pupils use their basic English skills throughout the curriculum. Work in English is generally presented well and pupils use their grammar skills consistently. However, teachers do not check that pupils are consistently transferring and therefore practising these skills across other curriculum subjects.

Teachers accurately identify pupils who need extra support. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff know pupils well and understand their individual needs. Adults provide precise support to help pupils access the curriculum alongside their peers.

Throughout the school, starting in early years, expectations about how well pupils behave are high. As a result, behaviour in lessons is purposeful. Pupils behave responsibly at breaktimes, lunchtimes and around the school.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is underpinned by the values that leaders encourage pupils to stay true to in their day-to-day lives. School trips and visits enhance their learning of the world, for example a Year 4 residential trip to Grafham Water. Strong links with the community help pupils learn about religion from representatives from the local churches.

Staff say that the workload is high at times but that leaders are supportive of their well-being.

Governors are supportive of leaders. They recognise that they need to do more to ensure that the recent curriculum changes are firmly embedded.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff, including governors, receive regular training to keep their knowledge of safeguarding up to date. They know what signs might indicate that a child is at risk and how to report safeguarding concerns. Leaders work with external agencies to support those pupils and families that are most vulnerable.

The curriculum content provides pupils with an awareness of how to stay safe, including online. They know that they should report their worries and concerns to adults.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have designed a curriculum that sets out clearly what they want pupils to know and be able to do from Reception to Year 6. However, some areas of the curriculum are more successfully implemented than others. In areas that are less well developed, teachers do not routinely plan learning that builds on pupils' existing knowledge and skills. Leaders should ensure that all staff receive the appropriate training and guidance to ensure that new learning builds on pupils' knowledge year on year.
- Leaders and teachers do not routinely check how well pupils are achieving. They do not know where pupils' gaps are in their learning in some areas of the curriculum. Teachers do not always check well enough what pupils can remember about their learning. Leaders' need to monitor more precisely the quality of pupils' learning in each curriculum area, so they have a thorough understanding of what pupils know and are able to do in all subjects.
- Although pupils mostly apply their learned English skills to their work in English, they do not consistently apply these skills in other areas of the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that the basic skills pupils learn are transferred and practised in all areas of the curriculum.

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, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

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	109480
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10241661
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jeanette Mills
Headteacher	Sarah Woodham
Website	www.shillingtonstondon.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Shillington Lower School is a smaller than average primary school.
- The school is part of a federation of two schools which share the same headteacher. The headteacher works alongside a head of school.

Information about this inspection

- 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 the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, art and science.
- For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders and discussed the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to pupils and teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to some pupils reading with a familiar adult.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school. This included in lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. They also met with the special educational needs coordinator and the PSHE leader. Documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance were reviewed.
- The lead inspector met with one member of the governing body, and two others joined the meeting remotely. The inspector also met with the school improvement advisor and spoke with staff.
- Inspectors spoke informally with parents outside the school.
- Inspectors considered the 47 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and 26 free-text responses received during the inspection. They also considered the 28 responses to the pupil survey. There were no responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Wayne Jarvis, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cindy Impey

Her Majesty's Inspector

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