

# Inspection of a good school: Stondon Lower School

Hillside Road, Lower Stondon, Henlow, Bedfordshire SG16 6LQ

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Inspection dates:

10 November 2022

## **Outcome**

Stondon Lower School continues to be a good school.

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

Pupils at Stondon school are happy and enjoy their learning. Pupils achieve well. They have positive relationships with each other and the adults around them.

The breadth of the curriculum enables pupils to talk confidently about the wider world around them. Pupils take part in interesting trips and meet visitors, who help make learning 'real'. These experiences include the chance to attend three places of worship on a local faith tour. This helps pupils remember key knowledge about what they are learning about.

Pupils make choices that meet the high expectations the adults in school have of them. Consequently, pupils behave well. Pupils with social and emotional needs receive support provided by skilled adults. Pupils are safe and say bullying rarely happens. Pupils report that if someone is unkind, adults help them to think about and change their behaviour.

The youngest children have settled well into school. This means they are already showing positive learning behaviours, such as learning to read. Older pupils have roles and responsibilities that they are proud of. These include the chance to be a school councillor and a trained sport ambassador.

Many parents commented positively about the 'nurturing and caring environment' where their 'children thrive'.

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

Leaders have planned a curriculum that is ambitious and relevant for their pupils. Staff have gained strong subject knowledge through ongoing support and training. Teachers use a range of strategies to help pupils remember key knowledge and skills. For example, recapping on prior learning and using strategies for pupils to talk in full sentences. Teachers use assessments effectively to check that pupils understand what they are

learning and then adapt lessons successfully. Delivering the curriculum in small steps of learning enables pupils to build on previous knowledge and, subsequently, achieve well.

Reading is a key focus across the school. Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme. Staff teach this consistently well. Pupils benefit from the clear routines and resources staff use. The books that pupils read are well matched to the sounds and words they know. The vast majority of pupils are reading at or above the expected level. The needs of pupils who are struggling to learn to read are identified correctly. They access additional tuition with well-trained adults. Nevertheless, this support is not consistently as effective as it could be. This means that pupils that struggle with learning to read do not catch up quickly enough and, therefore, do not read as fluently as others.

Children in the early years are taught to be independent and make choices about their learning. Most of the curriculum has been carefully broken down into small steps of what leaders expect children to know. However, in a few areas of the curriculum what is expected for the children to learn is not as clear. As a result, staff are not always aware of what specific skill or vocabulary should be taught. This means that opportunities can be missed, and children do not learn as well as they could.

The identification and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well suited to the needs of the pupils. It is a strength of the school. Parents spoken to and those that responded to the online survey, without exception, share this view. Additional support and resources within school are used well. The support of outside experts is called upon for extra advice as needed. Pupils with SEND access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Pupils' behaviour is consistently calm and focused. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Pupils enjoy the rewards given to them and respond positively to praise.

Leaders have designed the wider curriculum around the school's values. Pupils gain an understanding of values, such as 'respect' and 'responsibility', through assemblies and the role modelling by staff. Leaders ensure strategies to improve pupils' well-being are correctly targeted. Pupils are able to focus better on their learning in class when pupils are given sensory experiences. Attending large scale events in London, such as 'Young Voices', is specifically focused on increasing the wider experience of all pupils.

Leaders are both supported and challenged by governors. This is contributing towards maintaining and improving the quality of education pupils receive. Governors visit the school regularly to monitor developments with the curriculum and safeguarding. Governors ensure that the well-being of staff is a high priority, and they take action where needed to address any concerns.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about leaders' support for their well-being and workload.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safety and welfare of pupils is a central commitment and priority of all staff. Up-to-date training ensures that staff are aware of the potential risks to pupils. Staff understand how and when to report concerns about pupils. Leaders are diligent at following up concerns and seek the appropriate support that families need.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Well-planned, age-appropriate personal, social and health education lessons ensure pupils have opportunities to discuss safety and welfare issues.

Appropriate checks on adults working with pupils in school and at alternative provisions are in place.

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

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

- Additional support provided for pupils who are struggling to learn to read is not consistently effective. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to revisit and learn the sounds and words that they are not confident with. This means that some pupils are not reading or writing as fluently as they should. Leaders must ensure staff provide helpful opportunities for pupils to practise and apply these sounds in their extra reading and writing sessions. Leaders must closely monitor that the extra sessions are having the intended impact.
- Some aspects of the early years curriculum do not specify exactly how and what children should learn. Consequently, opportunities are missed for children to learn and remember specific skills, vocabulary and content. Leaders need to ensure that staff are trained to deliver all areas of learning. Leaders must make it clear exactly what skills, vocabulary and content needs to be taught and when, so all children are better prepared for learning the key stage 1 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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2012.

## **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.

## **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>	109469
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255228
<b>Type of school</b>	Lower
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	149
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Dr Jeanette Mills
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Woodham
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.shillingtonstondon.co.uk">www.shillingtonstondon.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Stondon Lower School is part of a federation of two schools which share the same headteacher. The headteacher works alongside a head of school.
- Leaders use one unregistered alternative provider.

## 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, mathematics and music. 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 pupils reading with a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school. This included in lessons, at breakfast club and at lunchtime.

- Documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance were reviewed. The lead inspectors met with leaders to discuss safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. The team inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the vice-chair and one other governor joined the meeting remotely. The inspector also met with the school improvement advisor and spoke with staff.
- The team inspector 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 and 19 responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Isabel Davis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Cathy Barr

Ofsted Inspector

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