

# Inspection of a good school: Southcott Lower School

Bideford Green, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 2UA

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Inspection dates:

2 and 3 March 2023

## Outcome

Southcott Lower School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Southcott Lower School is a school where pupils are well cared for. It is a nurturing school. One parent, reflecting the view of others, stated, 'We love it. You feel that you are part of the school.'

Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), rise to the challenge of high expectations that are set for them. Pupils enjoy lessons that are planned to create interest and ensure pupils know and remember more over time. Pupils stay focused and engaged during lessons. They understand it can take time to learn new things and are willing to work hard. As one pupil stated, 'You get the chance to practise the things you find difficult.'

Bullying is a rare occurrence. Pupils understand what bullying is. They say bullying does not happen very often. Pupils are supported well. They trust staff to keep them safe.

Pupils enjoy a range of opportunities to develop their wider interests. These include sports clubs, trips and visiting speakers. Guest scientists in the 'Southcott Super Scientist' project have inspired pupils to consider a career in the subject. Currently pupils have limited chances to develop their leadership skills.

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

Leaders have developed a well-designed curriculum. They have broken down what pupils learn into small steps. Teachers plan the curriculum to ensure pupils are given the opportunity to revisit important knowledge. Leaders prioritise developing pupils' vocabulary. For example, pupils confidently discussed botanists, chemical reactions and endangered species using specific scientific vocabulary.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They plan opportunities for pupils to recall and practise through revision tasks. In curriculum areas such as reading and mathematics, teachers check pupils' understanding effectively. This helps teachers identify pupils who

need extra support. Furthermore, checking systems recently introduced in English and mathematics help subject leaders to identify future priorities. However, while this is the case, inconsistencies exist in the use of assessment information in some other subjects.

Leaders ensure reading is a key priority. The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers start teaching phonics as soon as pupils begin school. Staff are well trained to teach children to read. They match reading books to pupils' reading ability. Pupils who need help with their reading are quickly identified. A range of interventions helps them to catch up quickly. Leaders have carefully chosen high-quality books to develop pupils' understanding of the world. For example, the story of the first Black female astronaut inspired Year 4 pupils to discuss 'advocate' and 'astronomy'. Pupils enjoy teachers reading to them each day. There is a strong promotion of reading for pleasure.

Leaders quickly identify pupils who need additional help. Working with specialist agencies, they ensure that they accurately identify pupils with SEND and put in place support that helps them to access the same curriculum as others. The provision for pupils with SEND is regularly reviewed. These plans contain the information and strategies staff use to deliver the support that pupils with SEND need to flourish. Most parents of pupils with SEND who shared their views are appreciative of the support their children receive.

Leaders have identified improving behaviour as a priority. They have recently implemented approaches to promote calm behaviour throughout the school day. This is beginning to work well. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning lead to focused and orderly behaviour in lessons. Pupils play well together at breaktimes. The new system is supporting pupils with complex needs to become more focused on their learning. New systems and approaches continue to be developed.

In the early years, children are safe and happy. 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. Staff deliver a curriculum which prepares children well for Year 1. Children learn the vocabulary and basic skills they need to become independent learners. Staff plan and deliver activities to reinforce what pupils learn in teacher-led sessions. Activities are designed to develop pupils' sense of awe and wonder.

Pupils settle quickly whenever they join the school. Year 4 pupils are well prepared for the transition to middle school. Leaders have introduced plans to further develop pupils' understanding of different beliefs, cultures and religions. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility in class. While leaders' ambition is that all pupils will be caring, purposeful future citizens, leaders have not included enough opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to take on roles that develop their independence and leadership skills outside of the classroom.

Staff appreciate how leaders consider their workload and well-being. From the newest members of staff to those who are long-standing, staff are proud to be part of the Southcott Lower School family.

The local governing body holds leaders to account and regularly visits the school. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. They use this information well to both challenge and support leaders effectively.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a culture where safeguarding is the responsibility of all. Staff are vigilant about pupils' safety and well-being. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. There are efficient and effective systems in place to enable leaders to support pupils and their families quickly.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe around water, roads, railways and online. The visit to Hazard Alley safety education centre teaches them what to do in an emergency.

Governors visit the school and check that safeguarding procedures are effective. They are involved with employing new staff and ensure that the school follows the appropriate procedures for safer recruitment.

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

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

- Assessment systems for foundation subjects are not developed as well as in other subjects. This means teachers are not able to identify pupils' next steps and priorities routinely. Leaders should fully implement successful assessment practices, drawing upon the effective practice already in place for English and mathematics, in other subjects. This will ensure teachers are able to plan in the support pupils need to achieve well in all areas of the curriculum.
- The curriculum content does not include enough opportunities for pupils to take on additional responsibilities outside of the classroom. This has limited the opportunities for pupils to further develop their confidence, resilience, and independence. Leaders should review the curriculum so they can plan in the chance opportunity for pupils to contribute positively to the school community. This will help pupils develop additional valuable experience and vital life skills for their future success.

## **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 June 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.

## **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>	109523
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255052
<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	305
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Jo Latham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Laundry
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.southcottlowerschool.com">www.southcottlowerschool.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, four governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. The inspector also reviewed a range of documents related to safeguarding, including the school's single central record.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at a range of work in history and geography.

- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a member of staff.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- To gather the views of pupils, the inspector spoke to groups of pupils, including in lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime. The inspector also took into account the 20 responses received to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- To gather the views of parents, the inspector spoke to some parents and reviewed the 122 responses, including 120 free-text responses, submitted to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.
- To gather the views of staff, the inspector spoke to several staff. The inspector also took account of the 45 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

## **Inspection team**

Simon Eardley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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