

Inspection of a good school: Flitwick Lower School

Temple Way, Flitwick, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 1LU

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

Outcome

Flitwick Lower School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and well cared for in the 'hive of learning' at Flitwick Lower School. Pupils like how staff take the time to get to know them. Pupils trust staff to keep them safe. Staff listen to and act on any concerns. Pupils experience very little bullying. Staff quickly intervene and put a stop to any unkindness.

Pupils benefit from staff's high expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils like how staff involve them in their learning. For example, pupils vote for which book they would like their teacher to read, promoting positive attitudes towards books and reading. Such positive attitudes towards learning helps pupils learn well.

Pupils respect and celebrate difference. They know that it is important to learn about the views of others, even if they differ from their own. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities around school, such as being an office assistant, playground leader, worry buddy, sports leader, or member of the school council.

Pupils are guided to stay physically healthy. They benefit from a programme that protects their mental health. This programme helps pupils learn how to build their own and others' self-confidence and resilience through teamwork opportunities in sports and project work.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious. It aims to promote a love of learning so that pupils achieve their best throughout their life. Leaders have identified the knowledge they want pupils to learn in each subject. Teachers have organised lessons to ensure pupils secure their understanding by revisiting important ideas. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, and they explain any new learning to pupils clearly. Teachers use assessment effectively to adapt lessons to support learning better and address any misconceptions

that pupils may have.

Leaders expect every pupil to learn to read well. They have established a rigorous and sequential approach to the teaching of reading. Teachers make regular checks to identify pupils who are falling behind with their reading. These pupils generally receive useful support. As a result, weaker readers show resilience and determination to read well, so their reading improves over time. However, a few pupils know the sounds that have been taught but occasionally find it tricky to decipher the sounds in words and sentences. Though they receive extra help, it is not always enough to help these pupils to quickly overcome this difficulty.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the full curriculum. The special educational needs coordinator provides useful information to teachers so teachers can adapt learning activities for pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND get the support required to meet their needs. This helps pupils with SEND to make strong progress in their learning and gain the independence they need to work well alongside others.

Leaders work closely with staff in the pre-school to set expectations for children's learning. Staff arrange some shared activities across the age range. They do this to enable a smooth transition for children between pre-school and Reception. This shows in children typically being confident. However, adults do not always plan activities, including how they use resources and the environment, that support children's learning well. Leaders have taken action, but further work is needed to address this fully.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour. They place great emphasis on rewarding positive behaviour, which underpins the whole-school behaviour policy. Leaders promote and celebrate achievements in a variety of ways. For example, every week, teachers nominate and celebrate the academic and personal achievements of pupils in their class. This helps pupils to learn from each other's positive actions.

Leaders and staff cater suitably for pupils' personal development. Leaders plan opportunities for pupils to make links with local organisations. These enable pupils to contribute to the wider community. To develop hobbies and interests, leaders provide clubs and cross-school sporting opportunities in cricket, football and tag rugby. To complement pupils' learning in school, staff organise educational visits. For example, pupils visit different places of worship to see how others practise their faith.

Staff enjoy working in this school. They appreciate that leaders are approachable. They feel supported to ensure that their workload is manageable. Leaders give staff clear directions and timely support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is at the forefront of everybody's mind. All staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff are alert and know how to recognise when a pupil

may be at risk of harm. Staff are confident in using the systems for recording and reporting concerns. Leaders act promptly. They work closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families can access the support they need. All necessary checks are carried out before staff are appointed to work at the school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves and others safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few pupils who are still learning to read occasionally find blending the letter sounds challenging. Although they receive books containing the sounds they know and support is in place, this does not always resolve this issue as quickly as it should. Leaders should review their reading programme so that staff receive the training and resources needed to teach all pupils to read confidently and fluently, be it in lessons or through catch-up support.
- Staff in the pre-school are sometimes unsure about how to realise leaders' curricular aims. Consequently, how staff plan and arrange activities, including the resources they use, can hinder children strengthening key skills ahead of the Reception Year. Leaders should provide the training and high-quality resources all pre-school staff need to realise leaders' expectations.

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 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.

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	109452
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10268523
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	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rachel Shield
Headteacher	Joanna New
Website	www.flitwicklower.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Flitwick Lower School has provision for two-year olds. This opened in 2021.
- Leaders use one registered alternative provider.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, assistant headteachers, governors and a representative working on behalf of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 56 responses and free-text comments to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The 31 responses to Ofsted's staff survey were also

considered. The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school.

- The inspector reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including policies and development plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector conducted meetings with leaders to discuss policy and procedure and to review records, including the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector also held discussions with governors, staff and pupils to gather further insights into the culture of safeguarding.

Inspection team

Bridget Harrison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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