

Inspection of a good school: Shefford Lower School

School Lane, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5XA

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2023

Outcome

Shefford Lower School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn and play. The strong focus on values underpins all areas of school life. Pupils are eager to show these values, such as cooperation and sharing, whenever they can. The FLOURISH approach (friendly, learning, open, understanding, relational, independent, safe and happy) encourages everyone to look after one another. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe. They know that there are adults who will help them if they have any worries.

Pupils enjoy their learning because teachers are knowledgeable and make lessons interesting. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They understand and respond well to adults' high expectations.

Pupils enjoy various enrichment experiences, through, for example, the museum, art gallery and immersive room. There are many clubs available, including for sports, music and the arts. Pupils contribute well to school life. They participate as school parliament members, play leaders, museum curators and reading buddies. These experiences help to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. One who summed up the views of many commented, 'a wonderful school where both my children have thrived'.

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

Leaders have developed a high-quality curriculum. It is well sequenced, so that pupils learn more over time. Opportunities for pupils to make connections between topics and across different subjects help them to remember their learning. Pupils learn the important vocabulary linked to each subject. They use this when they talk about their learning. In early years, there is a strong focus on communication, language and number. This ensures that children are well prepared for the next stage. Leaders regularly review the curriculum to ensure that it supports learning as well as possible. They are currently

developing the curriculum as the school grows in order to meet the needs of pupils in Years 5 and 6.

Subject leaders carefully check how well the curriculum is being delivered. They provide effective support and training for teachers. Teachers present the planned curriculum well. They check regularly whether pupils understand their learning. Leaders know that the use of assessment is less well developed in a few subjects. This means that teachers do not always identify precisely what pupils need to do to improve in these subjects.

Leaders have ensured that reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Children in Nursery get off to a good start by learning sounds, songs and rhymes. In Reception, children learn sounds and read words with increasing accuracy. The books they read help them practise the sounds they are learning. As a result, most pupils are fluent readers by the end of Year 1. Teachers make regular checks on how well pupils are progressing with their reading. Any who are falling behind receive effective support to help them keep up.

Older pupils learn more complex reading skills as they progress through school. They enjoy the texts they read in class. All classrooms have inviting reading areas that encourage pupils to read. There is also a well-stocked library. Pupils enjoy reading to the school dog and helping younger pupils to read. Such activities help develop their reading confidence and fluency.

Pupils behave well. There are positive and warm relationships between pupils and adults. From Nursery upwards, children understand routines and adults' expectations. As a result, learning is rarely disrupted.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified at the first sign of difficulties. This helps to ensure that the right support is in place for these pupils. Individual plans identify precise targets for each pupil. These are reviewed and adapted regularly. This helps to ensure that pupils with SEND can access the same curriculum as their peers. They make good progress from their starting points.

Many wider opportunities support pupils' development to become tolerant and active citizens. Pupils experience the democratic process through elections for the school parliament and voting for different pieces of music in assembly. Pupils learn how to stay safe and to look after their well-being. A wide range of clubs is on offer before, during and after school. Pupils enjoy visitors to school, for example authors. Pupils benefit from trips, such as to museums. These broaden pupils' experience. Forest school activities help to develop pupils' confidence, self-esteem and resilience.

Staff feel valued and well supported. They know that leaders care about their well-being.

Governors are knowledgeable. They provide effective support and challenge to leaders. They ensure that they carry out all appropriate checks on teaching, learning and safeguarding in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Leaders ensure that all staff have regular and appropriate safeguarding training. The staff know how and when to record concerns. They all know the pupils very well. This helps them to be aware of any changes that may indicate that a pupil may be at risk of harm.

Leaders follow up on any concerns quickly to ensure that families receive the right help in a timely manner. They ensure that all relevant pre-employment checks are made on new staff. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, staff do not always give pupils precise information on how to improve their work. This means that pupils' learning is not always so well supported in these subjects. Leaders should implement their plans to strengthen the use of assessment and feedback in these subjects.
- The school is growing to provide for pupils from Nursery up to Year 6. Leaders have appropriate plans to prepare everyone for these changes. They should continue with their planned work for this development. This includes extending and refining the existing curriculum, so that it continues to build on pupils' learning from the end of Year 4 through to the end of Year 6.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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 | 109479 |
| Local authority | Central Bedfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10268616 |
| Type of school | First |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 508 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Joanne Elliott |
| Headteacher | Pamela Finch |
| Website | www.sheffordlowerschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 22 and 23 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- There is a planned expansion programme for the school to grow from a lower school to a primary school from 2025.
- The current deputy headteacher will take up the post of headteacher in September 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Before- and after-school care is provided for pupils and is managed by those responsible for governance.

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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and religious education to evaluate the quality of education. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, considered curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and scrutinised samples of pupils'

work. Other aspects of the curriculum were also scrutinised to provide further evidence of the quality of education.

- The inspector observed some pupils reading aloud to staff and talked to them about their reading. She also spoke with other pupils about reading.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour across the school. She met with groups of pupils to seek their views of the school. She also spoke with pupils informally in class, around the school and at breaktimes. The inspector considered 35 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector spoke with members of staff about their workload and well-being and pupils' behaviour.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector scrutinised the single central record and reviewed safeguarding systems. The inspector spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, members of the governing body and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and the subject leader for personal, social and health education. The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair. Additionally, she met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including curriculum plans and school development plans.
- The inspector considered the views of parents. She spoke with parents at the end of the school day. The inspector also considered 48 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 48 free-text comments.
- The inspector spoke with different groups of staff to gather their views. Additionally, she considered 51 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Joan Beale, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023