

# Inspection of Silsoe CofE VC Lower School

Chestnut Avenue, Silsoe, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 4GP

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Inspection dates: 2 and 3 March 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

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

Pupils at Silsoe School feel included because of the caring ethos. There are warm and positive relationships between everyone. Pupils feel safe and happy. They talk about how the school values help them. For example, the school's value of 'positivity' helps them when their work gets hard.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and keen to share what they are doing. In some subjects, what pupils learn is not clearly set out. This means they do not always build on their learning.

Pupils are respectful to everyone. They respond well to the high expectations for behaviour. Lessons are calm and orderly. Pupils move sensibly around the school. They know what bullying is and say it rarely happens. If it is reported, pupils say it is always dealt with.

Pupils enjoy their trips and visits, including the Faith Tour, a trip to Celtic Harmony, and they are excited about the forthcoming trip to Grafham Water. These experiences help pupils to deepen their learning.

Leaders work hard to build positive relationships with the community. Most parents support the school. However, there are small number who share concerns about the quality and timeliness of communication from the school.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. Most areas of the curriculum are well sequenced and clearly identify what should be taught and when. Pupils' work shows they build on and deepen their learning over time. Teachers benefit from effective training, which improves their teaching. They are confident about adapting learning. Teachers' checks ensure that gaps in learning are quickly spotted and addressed to help pupils catch up. However, while this is the case and leaders are continuing their work on this, some areas of the curriculum lack the precise detail of what is being taught and when. This means that pupils do not always build on prior learning in a meaningful way. Where this is the case, pupils do not make the progress they should.

Learning to read is a priority, and there is a strong reading culture. Children quickly learn the sounds that letters make and can use the sounds to read simple words. Pupils enjoy reading and, where books are closely matched to pupils' phonic knowledge, they read accurately and fluently. Teachers regularly check reading progress. Any pupil at risk of falling behind with their reading receives effective support to catch up and keep up. A small number of older pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read do not always have books that closely match their phonic knowledge. This impacts on their progress and confidence.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Adults respond quickly to any low-level disruption and help pupils to focus.

Children in the early years make a strong start to their education. The curriculum is carefully planned and adapted to meet the needs of all children. Leaders are ambitious about what each child can achieve. Learning is planned to develop children's independence. Children are happy, engaged in their learning and keen to do their best. They respond positively to the school routines and are well prepared for their transition to Year 1.

Staff are well trained to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers and engage in the same ambitious curriculum. Leaders work closely with other professionals and parents to ensure pupils benefit from effective and personalised support. Pupils with SEND are very much included in the school community and achieve well. Pupils who attend the specialist provision enjoy a calm and supportive environment. Skilled adults support these pupils to learn and play, often alongside their peers in the mainstream school.

Pupils show respect and tolerance. They understand what it is to be different and that some pupils may need more support. They also understand about differences between, for example, families and religions, and they are respectful of this. They learn about British values through voting for representatives for the eco- and school councils.

Governors have a good understanding of their roles and statutory duties and make regular visits to the school. They undertake training to help them perform their roles. They are confident about challenging and supporting leaders to ensure the school priorities are achieved.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Training helps adults understand their responsibilities, and they are diligent in carrying these out. Adults trust that leaders will deal with concerns in an appropriate and timely way. Leaders liaise closely with external agencies. They are skilled, knowledgeable and committed to securing the best outcomes for their pupils.

Pupils feel safe at school. They know who they can go to if they need help. They are confident about keeping themselves safe when online. They know about using pseudo-names and not talking to anyone they do not know when playing games online.

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

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

- For a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not fully developed. In these subjects, the precise sequence of learning and what is to be taught and when is not clearly set out. This means that pupils learn a disconnected series of knowledge and skills that do not build on prior learning. Leaders must ensure that all subjects are planned and sequenced so that pupils build on their learning and are ready for the next stages of their education.
- Older readers who are at the early stages of reading do not always have books that closely match their reading ability. As a result, a small number of pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they should. Leaders must ensure that all readers have books that are closely matched to their ability.
- A small proportion of parents feel that leaders could engage with them better. Leaders should continue to review how they communicate with parents to ensure that as many parents as possible understand what leaders are doing and why, are engaged and know how to support their children even better with their education.

## 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>	109605
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Type of school</b>	Lower School
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	272
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Mandy Reddick
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Boyle
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.silsoeschool.co.uk">www.silsoeschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 February 2009, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There is a new headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The school has relocated to a different site and has doubled in size since its last inspection.
- The school operates its own breakfast and after-school clubs.
- There is a specialist education resource provision based at the school. There are currently eight pupils within the provision, whose primary needs are social, emotional and mental health.
- Silsoe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School is a part of St. Albans Diocese.
- The school is a Church of England school. The school's most recent inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act was conducted in June 2019. The school will receive its next section 48 inspection within eight years of that date.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants.
- The lead inspector also met with governors, including the chair of governors, and the school improvement partner.
- Deep dives were carried out in early reading, mathematics, computing, physical education and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, outside during social times and at the breakfast and after-school clubs.
- As part of the evaluation of the school's safeguarding processes, inspectors reviewed the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding leads.
- Inspectors reviewed the 63 responses submitted by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the 63 free-text responses from parents. Inspectors also considered 36 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and 86 responses to the pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Karen Stanton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Stevens	Ofsted Inspector
Joe Creswick	Ofsted Inspector

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