

Inspection of Harlington Lower School

Westoning Road, Harlington, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 6PD

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Victoria Paulding. This school is part of The Harlington and Sundon Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tim Kingham. Victoria Paulding is the chief executive officer for the trust. She is responsible for this school and one other.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Harlington Lower School as an academy under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a friendly, happy atmosphere around this school. Pupils are confident that their teachers will ensure they enjoy their learning and play. Pupils love the opportunities to get actively involved in tasks.

Pupils know their teachers will help them if they need it. They tackle the work they are given with enthusiasm. Pupils are confident that their teachers expect their best efforts. Sometimes, an extra challenge or support would enable them to achieve even more.

Pupils show good manners and respect for each other and the adults in school. They hold doors open, say please and thank you, and listen attentively. Pupils enjoy the regular activities in class that help them to develop strategies to manage their feelings. These help them to become confident and resilient.

At breaktimes, pupils chat or play with the equipment provided. Many children make good use of the library to enjoy books together. Pupils act as library ninjas and play leaders to help with these activities. Pupils trust the adults to help them resolve any friendship difficulties.

Pupils learn to stay safe online and about road safety. They enjoy trips such as to a museum or farm. These help them to develop their understanding of new ideas.

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

The school wants the best for the pupils. It has been working to make changes to the curriculum. Plans are in place for each subject, setting out what pupils are to learn as they move through the school. The school has thought about the most important vocabulary to help pupils to understand new ideas. Teachers introduce this clearly. On the whole, these plans are put in place well. Where they are most effective, pupils secure and build on previous learning well. In lessons, teachers introduce new ideas and check understanding before moving on.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn in class alongside their peers. Adults provide extra help 'on the spot' and through skilful interventions. They help them to listen and understand when teachers are explaining things. They provide plenty of encouragement so these pupils can join in and grow in confidence.

The school has ensured that adults get the right training to teach phonics well. From the early years, teachers introduce new sounds in small steps. They make sure that children get plenty of practice with their developing skills, using well-matched reading books. Pupils quickly become fluent and confident readers. Older pupils are enthusiastic about the books they read and those their teachers share with them.

Most pupils achieve well in national assessments. Occasionally, adjustments to plans and how these are put in place in some foundation subjects would help some pupils to demonstrate what they know and can do more clearly.

There are high expectations for behaviour throughout the school. Adults are consistently kind and constructive in their relationships with pupils. Teachers establish routines quickly in the early years. They help children to develop independence and make sensible choices. The school values, such as patience and honesty, are aligned to the behaviours that teachers promote. The school reinforces these values in assemblies, lessons and during the day. As a result, pupils understand why these values are important and are proud to behave well.

The school promotes regular, punctual attendance so that pupils can benefit from all that is available to them. They work closely with families to support this. Attendance levels are close to national expectations. Pupils arrive brimming with enthusiasm to get started each day.

Pupils learn about diversity and an appreciation of different cultures from the early years. Older pupils visit different places of worship. This helps them to learn about similarities as well as differences. Pupils are invited to ponder on and discuss 'big questions', such as 'Why am I special?' This helps to prepare them well for life beyond their village.

There is a range of extra-curricular provision. This enables pupils, including those with SEND, to try out new interests and develop their talents. Clubs include art, dance, and the popular choir. Pupils learn to play musical instruments. Over the year, pupils participate in a range of sporting events with other schools.

Trustees are strengthening their systems to support and challenge the school. Senior school leaders are considerate of the well-being of staff. During a period of rapid change and improvement, they have maintained the confidence and appreciation of staff. Some middle leaders currently have a better understanding than others of how effectively plans are being put in place, and are more able to secure continued improvement. Trustees recognise this and plan to strengthen middle leadership.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, curriculum plans are not consistently adapted well to meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, pupils sometimes do not get the opportunities to apply their learning in depth, and so achieve less well. The school should continue to develop staff expertise to implement and adjust the curriculum as required.

- Subject leaders are developing their expertise to provide additional support where needed. Some subject leaders do not always know what is working well or where further help would strengthen provision and improve outcomes for pupils. The school should continue to develop the expertise and capacity of subject leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and to work with colleagues to secure continued improvements.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138938
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10267853
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	150
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tim Kingham
CEO of trust	Victoria Paulding
Headteacher	Victoria Paulding
Website	www.harlingtonlower.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is part of The Harlington and Sundon Academy Trust.
- The headteacher is responsible for another school in the trust.
- The school does not make use of any off-site external providers of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with senior staff in the school and the trust, including the headteacher, chair of trustees, and the designated lead for safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke with the commissioned school effectiveness adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, geography and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at some samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the 61 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View. This included 36 comments from parents in the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the 18 responses to the staff questionnaire and 52 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynne Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Winwood

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