

Inspection of a good school: Sundon Lower School

Streatley Road, Upper Sundon, Luton, Bedfordshire LU3 3PQ

Inspection date: 16 July 2024

Outcome

Sundon Lower School continues to be a good school.

The executive headteacher of this school is Victoria Blunt, née Paulding. The school is part of the Pyramid Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Steve Kelly, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Owen Flack.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know the school values, such as friendship and respect, well. These guide their relationships with each other and with staff. In mixed-age classes, pupils at this small school make friends and work together from the early years. Some pupils join later from different settings. They are made welcome and soon feel part of this harmonious and happy community.

Pupils are confident that staff will keep them safe. They know that when they share a concern with staff, any unkindness will be stopped. At breaktimes, pupils play together kindly. Many pupils enjoy running around in the extensive grounds. For pupils who prefer a less energetic break, there are books outside to enjoy.

Despite some recent staffing changes, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They respond well to the high expectations for behaviour. Pupils settle quickly and quietly to the tasks they are given. In most subjects, they achieve well. Occasionally, an extra explanation or challenge would help them to achieve more.

Pupils enjoy clubs at lunchtime, such as choir and art. Through the local sports partnership, they join in sporting events with other schools. The oldest pupils take part in a residential trip with another local school.

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

The school has been going through a period of change. For example, it recently became part of a new academy trust and there have been some staffing changes. Throughout

this, leaders at every level have a shared vision for continued improvement. They are united in their commitment to reaching the best possible outcomes for pupils.

The school has developed curriculum plans that set out clearly what pupils are to learn and how this develops over time. Curriculum plans have been refined to meet the needs of pupils. For example, the school has considered the ongoing impact of the pandemic on pupils' language skills. It has therefore ensured an appropriate focus on securing vocabulary in all subjects from the early years.

Teachers mostly ensure that curriculum plans are put in place well. Occasionally, staff do not demonstrate the strong subject knowledge needed to teach the curriculum effectively. The school regularly checks how pupils are faring over time. Most pupils achieve well compared to their peers nationally. Where teaching is most effective, staff revise what pupils have learned previously and introduce new ideas clearly. They check what pupils know and adjust their teaching so that pupils get tasks that secure or extend their learning. However, this is not consistent. Sometimes, teachers' explanations are not clear enough or adults do not use their checks to make sure that tasks have the right level of challenge for all pupils.

The school teaches early reading skills from nursery. Leaders and staff use regular checks on phonics knowledge to spot any pupils who need help to catch up with learning to read. The school rapidly provides effective extra teaching for those who need it. Older pupils study a range of ambitious texts by classic and contemporary authors. Teachers introduce new vocabulary to help pupils with their understanding of these books. Pupils learn to read fluently and with understanding. Many pupils are enthusiastic readers.

The school quickly identifies any pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It develops detailed plans so that adults understand these needs and how to help. Children with SEND get the right support in lessons so they can join in with learning. Where pupils need bespoke support, for example with their behaviour or social, emotional and mental health, the school seeks and acts on specialist advice. As a result, pupils with SEND make sound progress.

Teachers set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils respond well to this from the start. Any pupils who join later quickly adjust to these high expectations. Pupils show respect and consideration for others. In the early years, children learn to share their toys and games kindly. Around the school, pupils line up sensibly. They hold doors open for each other and adults without prompting.

Older pupils are proud to be involved in decision-making. Each class researches and chooses a charity to support. They organise their own fundraising events to do this. The school council represents the views of pupils and carries out their own surveys, such as choosing which clubs to run.

Pupils learn how to stay safe and healthy. They learn about road safety with cycle training lessons. Pupils understand how to stay safe online. They know the importance of looking after their mental as well as physical health and have age-appropriate knowledge of how to do this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not consistently check on what pupils know and use this to adjust their teaching. When this happens, pupils do not get the right help to secure new ideas. The school should ensure that the right checks on pupils' learning are in place. The school should also ensure that teachers use their checks on pupils' understanding to plan activities and sequences of lessons that consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge.
- Some staff do not teach the curriculum as well as leaders intend. Occasionally, they do not explain things clearly or make links to what pupils already know in order to extend their thinking. As a result, a few pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that all staff have the right subject knowledge and expertise to teach all subjects effectively.

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 deemed the school to be good in February 2015.

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 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	138939
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10345352
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Owen Flack
CEO of trust	Steve Kelly
Executive Headteacher	Victoria Blunt
Website	www.sundonlower.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Pyramid Schools Trust in February 2024.
- The school does not use any off-site providers of alternative education.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized school, with pupils in three mixed-age classes. The school is a lower school. Pupils leave at the end of Year 4 and complete the primary phase of their education in other schools.

Information about this inspection

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 COVID-19 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, including the executive headteacher, chair of governors, and the designated lead for safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke with representatives of the trust leadership team, including the CEO.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with staff, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors reviewed minutes of governors' and trustees' meetings, school development plans, curriculum documentation and external reports relating to the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and children; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents through responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils through Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys, as well as discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Lynne Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Rockey

His Majesty's Inspector

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