

Inspection of Shillington Lower School

Greenfields, Shillington, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 3NX

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Shillington Lower School take pride in their achievements. Staff encourage pupils to be independent. They organise lessons to help every pupil to do their best. Pupils say that it is alright to make mistakes because this helps them remember what to do well next time. Staff have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour in class. This means that they listen well and are attentive. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) take part in all aspects of school life and work well alongside their peers.

Pupils feel happy and safe. They believe that everyone should be treated fairly and equally. They say they know who to go to if they have a worry and that bullying is rare. Parents and pupils are confident that if bullying does occur, leaders deal with it effectively.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and activities, such as gardening and multi-sports. These enable pupils to follow their interests and broaden their horizons. Pupils learn the benefits of physical activity on fitness and mental health. They like the responsibility of leading games that keep themselves and others active. Pupils learn about water safety from a young age through access to the school swimming pool.

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

The development of a broad and ambitious curriculum has been a priority for leaders. In most subjects, plans set out what pupils will learn and by when from Reception to key stage 2. These include key vocabulary that pupils should know at each stage of their learning. Teachers use curriculum plans to build on what pupils have learned before. They present information clearly so that pupils know what they are learning. Teachers check pupils' understanding and provide success criteria to help them achieve well. In some subjects, teachers have received useful training. This has given them the expertise to be precise in what they teach. They have the confidence to make changes to lessons to meet pupils' needs.

In subjects that are well developed and teachers have received training, pupils remember what they have learned well. Pupils make connections with other learning experiences and remember more. Some subjects are not as well developed, and teachers are still familiarising themselves with them. In these subjects, not all pupils remember what they have been taught.

Pupils enjoy reading and choosing books from the school library. They talk enthusiastically about them and like discussing the moral dilemmas in the stories.

Pupils learn phonics daily from the early years. There is a clear structure and sequence to the teaching of phonics so that pupils learn to read well. Staff training helps them to identify gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. This means that pupils who are in the early stages of reading are identified quickly. Pupils' reading books

are closely matched to the sounds they know so that they learn to read fluently. Pupils who are less fluent readers receive extra practice and support so that they catch up.

Older pupils apply their phonic knowledge to writing their own stories. They learn how to check spellings and edit their own work. They use dictionaries to help them. Pupils with SEND are well supported. Teachers put plans in place that meet pupils' individual needs so that they can access learning with their peers.

Teachers provide praise that helps pupils know what they have done well. They provide clear rules and familiar routines that support pupils to behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Leaders are clear in their expectations of pupils' attendance. They track this and put plans in place for pupils with persistent absence.

Staff support pupils' personal development well. A carefully planned programme of trips helps pupils learn about the wider community and other people's faiths. Pupils know it is important to listen to the views of others and to respect others' differences. Pupils on the school council are proud of their participation in charitable events.

Children in the early years enjoy a range of activities from the moment they start pre-school. There are many opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. Adults are on hand to support and guide children in their play. This helps them learn new words and join in counting games. Children are keen to write and make marks. They use their imagination to make potions and write ingredients for a soup recipe. Teachers are precise in how they develop children's literacy and mathematics skills. In other areas of learning, the knowledge children will learn is not as clearly planned for. This means children do not learn as much as they could from the earliest opportunity so that when they move on, they can benefit fully from what the rest of the school curriculum has to offer.

Leaders are focused on improving teachers' subject knowledge to ensure the curriculum is taught well. Staff find leaders' support and feedback helpful.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are persistent in finding the right help and support for families. They work well with other agencies to ensure this is effective. Staff know how to identify and record concerns about pupils that may be at risk of harm. Leaders keep the single central record of employee checks up to date. They make sure all pre-employment checks are completed.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they know to speak out and have their views taken seriously and to get help when they need it.

Governors check regularly that procedures to keep pupils safe are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, curriculum plans are in the early stages of implementation. Not all teachers have a secure understanding of how key knowledge in these subjects builds over time. Leaders should continue to establish their curriculum plans so that pupils have sufficient time to revisit and integrate new knowledge into wider learning.
- By the end of Reception, children achieve well. In the pre-school, the curriculum doesn't always precisely identify the knowledge children will acquire in some areas of learning. This means children do not secure the knowledge and skills they need to benefit from what the curriculum has to offer for the rest of their schooling. Leaders need to ensure they plan precisely for the knowledge they want children to learn from the youngest age so that this can lay the foundations for success across the curriculum into Year 1.

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	109480
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10288421
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jeanette Mills
Headteacher	Sarah Woodham
Website	www.shillingtonstondon.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 July 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school has provision for two-year-olds.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions to support pupils with SEND.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with five governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education and history. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, spoke with pupils and staff and listened to pupils reading.

Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and looked at pupils' work in a range of other subjects.

- The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spoke to pupils when visiting lessons, met with groups of pupils and spoke to pupils at breaktimes. They also considered the 58 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the 29 responses and 25 free-text comments submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of staff, including non-teaching staff. They also considered 13 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey

Inspection team

Mireille MacRaid, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lucille Pollard

Ofsted Inspector

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