

Inspection of a good school: Chalton Lower School

Luton Road, Chalton, Luton, Bedfordshire LU4 9UJ

Inspection date: 4 May 2023

Outcome

Chalton Lower School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Chalton Lower School is a friendly, happy place to learn in. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They look forward to the interesting activities that teachers plan for them. Pupils listen well in lessons. The curriculum 'focus days' help pupils to develop a deeper understanding of a topic by being immersed in experiences, such as the most recent 'Roman day', when pupils brought battles to life using their knowledge from history lessons.

Pupils enjoy learning a wide range of subjects. They like the way teachers explain new ideas. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage in learning.

Pupils learn important values such as care, humility and cooperation. These values help them to understand what it means to be a good friend. As a result, bullying is rare. Pupils feel safe in school. They use the 'worry monster' to share any concerns with adults.

Pupils attend a range of school trips. They particularly enjoy the residential visit, where they learn to take risks with outdoor adventure activities. Pupils enjoy representing the school at sporting events, such as rugby, netball and cricket tournaments. Older pupils learn responsibility. They have jobs such as setting up for assembly and being buddy readers for younger pupils.

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

Leaders have successfully managed a significant amount of change to the curriculum within a short space of time. They have created a curriculum that is well matched to pupils' needs and sets high expectations of what pupils will learn. Leaders have set out what they want pupils to know and do in each subject. Leaders carry out checks on how well the curriculum is being implemented. They adapt the curriculum to better suit pupils' needs when necessary. Some subject leaders are new to the role, and are being supported with making suitable changes.

Teachers know the curriculum well and show strong subject knowledge. They present information clearly and ensure that pupils' work is well matched to their learning stage. Most teachers break learning down into small steps to enable all pupils to achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Teachers check what pupils know and can do in a range of ways. They target questions to check pupils' understanding and support those who are not secure. Staff fill gaps in learning quickly. In some subjects, pupils are not confident at connecting their previous learning with new learning. In these subjects, teachers do not consistently revisit previous learning to ensure that pupils have understood the key concepts.

Leaders have acted with urgency and prioritised the teaching of early reading. The new phonics programme provides staff with the training and resources they need to teach phonics effectively and consistently from the early years. The familiar routine helps pupils learn how to sound out unfamiliar words to become confident, fluent readers. Teachers use assessment effectively to target where pupils are weaker with their phonic knowledge. They provide opportunities for pupils to practise the sounds they are less confident with. Pupils enjoy reading to adults. They have books that are well matched to their reading stage to help them develop their fluency.

Leaders have developed new systems for the identification of pupils with SEND. Most pupils with SEND have work that meets their needs, and they receive targeted support from adults to help them achieve. As a result, pupils with SEND are mostly making progress through the curriculum similar to that of their classmates. In some classes, pupils with complex needs are not as well supported as others. This is due to some staff members not having the information or knowledge they need to support these pupils as effectively.

From early years, pupils learn and follow routines and expectations. They settle down for lessons quickly. Pupils learn values that help them to become a better learner, such as patience, courage and quality. Pupils want to do their best and make their teachers proud. They respond positively to the reward systems leaders have put in place.

Pupils are confident to share their opinions. They can talk about different faiths and why respecting differences is important. Children in the early years learn about healthy eating and how to stay healthy with movement. This is further developed as older pupils learn about the importance of regular exercise through the daily jog. They know why exercise is important for mental health.

Leaders, including governors, are mindful of staff's workload and well-being when making decisions. They ensure that staff are well supported to carry out their roles effectively. Staff are proud to work at the school and to be a member of the team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils report any worries or concerns to staff, and trust staff to keep them safe. Staff know pupils well. As a result, they are well placed to quickly identify and report concerns. Leaders act at pace to resolve situations and ensure that pupils are kept safe. Leaders prioritise staff training. They ensure that staff keep up to date with safeguarding updates.

Leaders complete all the necessary checks for staff working at the school. Leaders seek advice and work with external agencies when needed. Pupils learn about online dangers, and what to do if they see something that concerns them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils with SEND are not as well supported as others. In some cases, staff do not have the information they need to adapt learning for pupils' needs. This means that some pupils with SEND are not achieving as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that staff are trained to support pupils' needs appropriately. Leaders must provide staff with the information they need to ensure that all pupils with SEND receive effective support.
- In some subjects, pupils struggle to connect new learning to what they have already learned. Teachers are not consistently checking that pupils are secure with key concepts that will be needed for future learning, and move on to new content too quickly. Leaders must support subject leaders to check that the curriculum is being implemented as leaders intend. Leaders must ensure that, in all subjects, teachers help pupils to connect previous learning with new content and knowledge.

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 June 2018.

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	109487
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10286236
Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kelly Cook
Headteacher	Natalie Bill
Website	www.chaltonlower.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school is a lower school. Most pupils leave at the end of Year 4 and complete the primary phase of their education in a middle school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at other curriculum plans, including for science and personal, social and health education.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the senior teacher, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- To inspect safeguarding, meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector also reviewed records, policies and documents relating to safeguarding.
- To evaluate aspects of the school and leaders' work, the lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the local governing body.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors observed and spoke with pupils, including at breaktimes. Inspectors reviewed the six responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the 22 responses and the 22 free-text comments submitted to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.
- The inspectors took account of the seven responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

Nerrissa Bear, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

James Chester

His Majesty's Inspector

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