

Sheerhatch Primary School

Address: Willington Road, Cople, Bedford, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK44 3TH

Unique reference number (URN): 109442

Inspection report: 6 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

School leaders have ensured that pupils, along with their parents and carers, understand the importance of attending school regularly. In the past, some groups of pupils did not attend as promptly or as regularly as they should, but leaders have addressed this effectively. Pupils now arrive on time for school, eager to learn. Attendance is celebrated and remains a regular topic of conversation. When needed, leaders work closely with families and provide well-tailored support. As a result, pupils now generally attend school well.

Staff typically set high expectations for how pupils should behave in class. They expect pupils to listen and concentrate. Most pupils meet these expectations, demonstrating positive attitudes to their learning. Consequently, classrooms are generally calm, orderly and conducive to learning. On occasion, pupils lose focus, but staff usually address this effectively. Learning, therefore, continues without disruption. Behaviour at lunchtime and in the playground is positive. Pupils get along well, make up their own games and play together cohesively. Adults are available when needed, but their intervention is rarely required. Bullying is very rare, and leaders take it seriously, addressing it promptly whenever it occurs.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have established an inclusive culture throughout the school. Their effective work to reduce pupils' barriers to learning is having a positive impact. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified accurately and swiftly. This means that effective guidance and support is in place to help pupils with SEND learn well.

Disadvantaged pupils receive the right support at the right time. The school tracks these pupils individually, enabling leaders to use pupil premium funding carefully so that it has the greatest positive impact on pupils' experiences. Pupils receive a range of support to boost academic progress, improve attendance or help with personal family circumstances. This leads to these pupils feeling part of a school community that cares for their individual needs.

Staff routinely review how well pupils with SEND and those with other barriers to learning are progressing towards their targets. Leaders provide relevant training for staff to ensure they keep their knowledge about SEND up to date. Positive links with external agencies ensure that the school draws upon expert knowledge where needed.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal development offer is broad and designed to build character and prepare pupils for life beyond school.

The personal, social and health education curriculum is established and ensures pupils gain age-appropriate knowledge of important topics in modern Britain. For example, pupils learn about online safety in a comprehensive way. They typically talk confidently about how to stay safe online and behave appropriately when using technology. Pupils also understand

and respect difference. They are tolerant of anyone who may look or think differently from themselves.

The range of trips and visits are significant. These widen pupils' experiences of their local area and beyond. For example, the whole school visits Wrest Park to learn about local heritage and history. Further afield, all pupils attend a theatre trip, as leaders are aware this is a new experience for many of them. These experiences enhance pupils' cultural learning beyond the classroom.

There are a range of clubs on offer to all, covering sports, arts and music. Pupils are particularly proud of the 'RotaKids Club'. Here, they develop links with children in Kenya, raise money to support their schooling and help improve their own school environment. One example is the money they raised for a 'peace garden' in school, providing a place to help pupils regulate their emotions. This gives pupils a sense of social responsibility and supports them in making a meaningful contribution to their local community and beyond.

Pupils also take on leadership roles and run clubs for their peers at lunchtimes. Through regular surveys, they can share their opinions on different aspects of the school and influence what will be on offer in the future.

Together, this broad offer helps pupils become confident, socially aware and well-rounded young people, who are generally well prepared for life in wider society.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Over the past 3 years, too few pupils have achieved the expected standard in writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. Similarly, too few pupils have acquired their early reading skills at an age-appropriate rate. Pupils have gaps in key knowledge, for example in handwriting and sentence construction, meaning they are not as ready for their next steps in education as they should be.

However, pupils' achievement is starting to improve. Leaders' actions mean that pupils are steadily making better progress through the curriculum. For example, pupils are increasingly developing their number fluency and achieve well recalling key number facts, such as times tables. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are also developing more secure knowledge.

On the whole, pupils are learning the important knowledge they need to be successful in subjects across the wider curriculum. They build upon their previous learning in subjects, such as geography and art, helping them to understand and remember new concepts with increasing confidence and accuracy.

Across the school, there are inconsistencies in the way the curriculum is taught. This includes the teaching of writing, which requires further development. Leaders are aware of this and are beginning to take the right action. Staff do not always have secure subject knowledge to teach content well. As a result, they are not always able to explain ideas clearly to pupils. Similarly, at times staff do not assess pupils' learning quickly enough. This means pupils are sometimes given tasks that are not well matched to their needs. When teaching is more effective, teachers explain new learning clearly. They use questioning to check understanding and adapt their teaching accordingly, which means activities are more closely matched to the needs of pupils.

Leaders have recently implemented a new approach to the curriculum in some subjects. This means the curriculum now has greater coherence so that pupils can build knowledge more securely over time. Reading is a priority across the school. There are consistent approaches to the teaching of phonics and reading, and this is starting to have an impact. Pupils are developing a love of reading and have access to a wide range of books. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from careful adaptations to their work, which are generally closely matched to their individual targets.

Early years

Needs attention 

In the past, too few children have left early years prepared well enough for Year 1. A significant proportion have had gaps in key knowledge, such as letter and number formation, which creates a barrier to successfully accessing the Year 1 curriculum.

Leaders are starting to take effective action. They understand the importance of children making an excellent start in early years. Children's development is improving, and they now build knowledge more securely. Staff typically interact with children in meaningful ways to extend their knowledge and vocabulary. The inviting outdoor environment provides a space for children to extend their learning. On occasion though, the learning tasks children complete do not give them enough opportunity to practise and consolidate what they have been taught in adult-led sessions.

Children use their developing language skills to support their early reading. Phonics is taught increasingly well, enabling children to secure stronger early reading skills.

Children understand and follow classroom routines. Warm relationships with staff mean they feel safe and confident in school. Children learn how to get along with each other. They emulate the adults' warmth and respectful behaviours. Children share, cooperate and develop increasing levels of independence.

Positive relationships between the school and parents and carers are fostered, ensuring a shared understanding of what children are learning and how well they are developing at home and in school.

Current leaders, including governors, have provided stability and strategic direction for the school following a significant period of turbulence. However, there is still much work for leaders to do. Pupils' academic experience is not yet giving them the opportunity to achieve their full potential. While staff are being trained to develop their practice, they are not yet suitably adept at delivering teaching and learning effectively across the school. Some planned changes to the curriculum are yet to be implemented. This means progress in raising achievement is not happening as quickly as it could.

Leaders have worked with determination to make the school a place where pupils feel safe and secure. Improved attendance, positive engagement with the community and the school's work to ensure all pupils are fully included in school life are examples of the impact of their efforts.

Staff are motivated to access training and support that will enable them to develop in their roles. They appreciate that more training is now available to them. They also value the careful consideration given to their workload as changes are introduced. They know leaders will support them and consider the impact on them as developments take place.

Governors are heavily invested in the school. Like school leaders, they want the very best for pupils. They recognise the progress being made but also understand improvement is still required. They are unwavering in their support for school leaders and are now holding them to account more effectively in areas where the school needs to improve.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

This school is at the heart of the village communities it serves. Warm and caring relationships emanate throughout the school. Pupils feel happy, safe and well cared for in this welcoming environment.

Over time, pupils have not achieved as well as they could. Too many leave school at the end of Year 6 not academically ready for secondary school. Similarly, too many children leave the Reception Year without the knowledge they need to be successful in Year 1. Although pupils' achievement is slowly improving and pupils' barriers to learning are being reduced, significant work remains to ensure pupils consistently gain the knowledge they need to prepare them for their next stages.

Pupils typically behave well. The school is calm and conducive to learning. The strong relationships between pupils and staff mean pupils want to do the right thing and generally do. Most listen carefully in class and contribute to lessons enthusiastically. The playground is a hive of activity. Pupils get along well and play harmoniously. Games such as football and basketball proceed without the need for adult intervention.

Pupils' attendance has improved over time. They arrive promptly for school, and most attend regularly. On arrival, pupils are warmly greeted by staff and welcomed into school. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make a positive start to the school day and settle down to their learning quickly.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, benefit from a range of wider opportunities. They are proud to take an active role in school life and the community. Their work with a partner school in Kenya is an example of the wider offer pupils benefit from. This helps them to understand and respect different cultures around the world. All pupils are known and fully included in school life.

Next steps

- Leaders must further train and support staff to strengthen their subject knowledge and expertise to improve the quality of teaching across the school.
 - Leaders must support staff to further develop the use of formative and summative assessment strategies to consistently meet the learning needs of pupils.
 - Leaders should ensure that teaching in the early years further supports children to learn, apply and practise the important skills they need to be ready for Year 1.
 - Leaders need to implement proposed curriculum changes, including the development of the writing curriculum, promptly to ensure pupil outcomes improve more quickly.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Sarah Jane Cropley.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, a range of school staff, a group of governors and a representative from the local authority during the inspection.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Cheryl Williams

Lead inspector:

Jonny Wallace, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Karen Stanton, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 6 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

127

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

19.69%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.36%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

22.83%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	42%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	39%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	38%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	81%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	72%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	51%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	63%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	43%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	58%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	56%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	33%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	67%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	42%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	58%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	33%	68%	-34 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	67%	80%	-13 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	42%	78%	-36 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	58%	80%	-21 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been

mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	6.8%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.9%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	5.3%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	16.4%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.3%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	11.0%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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 <https://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 2026



