

Shackleton Primary School

Address: Pearcey Road, Shackleton Primary School, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK42 9LZ

Unique reference number (URN): 144545

Inspection report: 27 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 

Leaders' work to improve attendance is having a positive impact. Overall attendance has risen over time and continues to improve. Persistent absence remains higher than the national average, although it is reducing year on year. Leaders build strong relationships with families and work closely with external agencies and the local authority to put effective support in place for pupils who struggle to attend regularly.

Attendance for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved over time. Leaders' targeted actions, close monitoring and regular engagement with families are contributing to a more positive attendance picture for these pupils. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils is also improving from a low base, although persistent absence remains an area of focus.

Staff consistently model the behaviour they expect from pupils. Behaviour across the school is orderly and purposeful. Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. During lunchtimes and breaktimes, pupils use playground spaces and equipment sensibly and take part in activities that keep them engaged. As a result, pupils return to lessons settled and ready to learn. Pupils show kindness and respect towards one another, contributing to a calm, supportive atmosphere across the school. Bullying is uncommon and staff address any instances of poor behaviour swiftly and well.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a curriculum intended to build pupils' knowledge and skills progressively over time. The curriculum is well organised, with clear expectations for what pupils should learn, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have rightly made these areas a priority.

Leaders have strengthened professional learning so that teachers receive timely support when practice is less secure. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of curriculum and teaching across the school. They check teaching and pupils' work regularly, helping them to identify where practice is less consistent. Leaders provide feedback, coaching and further training to support improvement.

Assessment and checking of learning in the core subjects are well established. Leaders are quick to identify what is going well and what needs to improve, and they take appropriate action. However, in some year groups, particularly within the wider curriculum, these improvements are not being put in place as quickly or consistently as leaders intend, which reduces their impact.

Teachers generally know pupils' needs and provide appropriate support in lessons, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional adults support pupils' access to learning effectively. While some variability remains beyond the core subjects, leaders' monitoring identifies this accurately and informs further support so that pupils build knowledge more securely over time.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children typically join the early years with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age, particularly in communication and language. Leaders prioritise securing the basics from the earliest stages. Early years provision has been strengthened so that children access learning earlier in Nursery and move smoothly into the Reception Year. This helps children to settle quickly and prepares them well for Year 1.

The early years curriculum helps children revisit and deepen their learning across all areas. Adults focus strongly on developing communication and language and engage children in purposeful talk. They model language, extend vocabulary and respond carefully to children's starting points. Well-planned indoor and outdoor provision encourages curiosity, imaginative play and physical development. Adults adapt activities when gaps are identified.

In the Reception Year, teachers teach phonics using a consistent approach. Children learn the sounds they need to read and write and practise applying this knowledge through familiar routines that build confidence and enjoyment. Adults also support children to manage their emotions and follow routines appropriately for their age.

Staff and leaders work closely with parents and carers so that children receive consistent support at home and in school. As children move into Year 1, they demonstrate secure early writing skills, confidence in applying phonics and positive attitudes to learning.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have established an inclusive culture in which pupils are known well and supported appropriately. Leaders identify pupils who face barriers to learning early, including pupils who join the school partway through the year and those who are new to the country. They use assessments, discussions with staff and advice from specialists to understand whether barriers relate to language acquisition, special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantage or wider vulnerability. This enables leaders to put appropriate support in place so that pupils can catch up and learn alongside their peers.

Teachers generally understand pupils' needs and adapt learning so that pupils can engage with the curriculum. This includes targeted support for pupils at an early stage of learning English and for pupils who have educational gaps due to mobility. Additional staff are deployed effectively to support pupils' access to learning. Where pupils require more specialist or flexible support, leaders use targeted provision and, where appropriate, alternative provision.

Leaders review pupils' welfare and learning regularly. However, in some cases, particularly for pupils with increased needs, pupils' learning needs and next steps are not always identified sharply enough. As a result, learning is not always matched as precisely as it could be to what pupils need to learn next.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders provide clear direction and have established a positive culture across the school. They are ambitious for pupils and have appropriately prioritised improving teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics. This focus has led to greater consistency in classroom practice over time and is beginning to have a positive impact on current pupils' achievement.

Leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development well. They use monitoring and assessment information to identify priorities and have put in place actions that align with the areas for improvement identified by inspectors. Leaders have strengthened professional learning and support for staff. Teachers value the guidance, coaching and feedback they receive. Staff report that leaders are approachable and considerate of workload and wellbeing.

Leaders promote an inclusive culture in which pupils are known well and supported. They work with families and external agencies to reduce barriers to learning and wellbeing, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Safeguarding arrangements are effective, and leaders ensure that pupils' welfare is prioritised.

Members of the local governing board provide support to school leaders but do not consistently offer the same level of strategic challenge. Local governors rely heavily on information provided by school leaders and continue to develop the confidence and expertise needed to evaluate impact independently. However, oversight from the trust helps to strengthen accountability and supports leaders to maintain a clear focus on improvement.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders provide a broad and inclusive programme to support pupils' personal development and wellbeing. The curriculum is carefully sequenced from the early years, where children learn to recognise and manage their emotions and develop self-regulation. This builds step by step through the school, so that by Year 6 pupils explore themes such as identity, relationships, mental health and resilience.

Pupils learn how to stay safe online and in the community. They develop an age-appropriate understanding of relationships, personal boundaries and risk. They learn about fairness, respect and understanding difference, including different beliefs, cultures and backgrounds. These experiences help pupils to develop confidence and a secure understanding of life in modern Britain.

Pupils learn about fundamental British values in meaningful ways. They contribute positively to school life through opportunities such as the school parliament. This enables pupils to share views, represent others and understand that their voices matter. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils are supported to participate fully, helping them to develop confidence, responsibility and a strong sense of belonging. Leaders also place a strong emphasis on pastoral support for pupils who need it most. Staff know pupils well and work closely with families and external professionals to help pupils feel safe, supported and able to engage positively with school life.

Leaders provide a wide range of enrichment activities, trips and experiences that broaden pupils' horizons beyond the local area. These include educational visits, performances, outdoor learning activities, music and various sports clubs. Leaders remove barriers so that disadvantaged pupils can access these opportunities. Pupils value these experiences and, as a result of this work, develop their confidence, self-esteem, curiosity and wider interests.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Although there have been recent improvements, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics does not meet national expectations. As a result, some pupils do not secure the knowledge and skills needed for the next stage of their education. Some pupils typically join the school with starting points lower than could be expected for their age. Leaders have prioritised improving teaching in the core subjects, and as a result, current pupils benefit from more consistent practice. Many pupils are now making better progress through the curriculum and show growing confidence and engagement in their learning, contributing to an improving picture across the school.

However, pupils' achievement is not yet consistent across year groups. Some pupils do not reliably remember and apply their learning in the wider curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally progress appropriately from their starting points, but where their needs are increased, learning is not always matched precisely enough to their individual targets.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming school. They feel valued and part of the community. Pupils come from a wide range of cultural and social backgrounds. Many join the school at different points in their education. They settle quickly because adults support them to develop important skills from the earliest stages. From the start, pupils build confidence, communication skills and positive attitudes to learning, helping them to feel included. Staff help pupils to overcome barriers linked to language, mobility, disadvantage and special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps all pupils to participate positively in learning. Many pupils take part in enrichment activities beyond lessons, which further strengthen relationships and pupils' sense of belonging.

Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. They feel safe because adults look after them well. Pupils understand that bullying is rare. They are confident that any worries or concerns are dealt with quickly and appropriately.

Pupils value learning alongside others from different backgrounds and cultures. They show respect for one another. Pupils live the school's values of being 'ready, respectful and safe'. These values underpin pupils' positive attitudes to learning and behaviour. Classrooms are

calm and purposeful, helping pupils to settle quickly and focus on their work. Pupils are supported alongside their families to attend school regularly. As a result, attendance is improving over time.

Pupils enjoy learning, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Clear lesson structures and consistent expectations help them to grow in confidence and improve engagement over time. However, pupils' achievement in these subjects does not meet national expectations. In addition, pupils do not consistently remember and apply their learning across the wider curriculum. Consequently, some pupils do not build knowledge securely or leave the school as well prepared as they should be for the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should improve pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics so that more pupils meet national expectations and securely remember and apply their learning over time.
 - Leaders should ensure that the clarity and consistency evident in the core subjects are embedded across all subjects so that pupils build and retain knowledge securely across the wider curriculum.
 - Leaders should strengthen the precision of support for pupils with increased special educational needs and/or disabilities so that learning is closely aligned to individual needs and targets.
 - Governors should strengthen their strategic oversight so that they evaluate the impact of leaders' actions more rigorously and hold leaders to account for pupils' outcomes.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of Heart Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), David Morris, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Hoare.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with senior leaders, trustees and governors during the inspection.

An inspector also spoke with a representative for the virtual school's headteacher.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about this school:

The school currently uses one alternative provider.

The school runs an on-site nursery provision for children aged 2 and 4.

The school provides wraparound care.

Headteacher: Andie BenBrahim

Lead inspector:

Cindy Impey, Ofsted Inspector

Team inspectors:

Ahson Mohammed, Ofsted Inspector

Michele Geddes, Ofsted Inspector

Sara Boyce, His Majesty's 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 27 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

465

Well above 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

540

Well above 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)

37.25%

Above 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

5.16%

Above 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

15.05%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above 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	41%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	54%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	43%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	29%	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	64%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	63%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	61%	73%	Below

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	48%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	66%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	51%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	34%	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	62%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	66%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	66%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	56%	73%	Below

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)	48%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	38%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	14%	44%	Below

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	62%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	60%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	60%	Close to average

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	41%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	60%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	46%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	18%	58%	Below

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	53%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	52%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	59%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	45%	59%	Below

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)	48%	69%	-21 pp
2023/24 (final)	38%	67%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	14%	66%	-52 pp

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	62%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	60%	81%	-21 pp
2023/24 (final)	68%	80%	-12 pp
2022/23 (final)	55%	78%	-23 pp

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	41%	78%	-37 pp
2024/25 (revised)	60%	78%	-18 pp
2023/24 (final)	46%	78%	-32 pp
2022/23 (final)	18%	77%	-60 pp

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	53%	80%	-27 pp
2024/25 (revised)	52%	81%	-29 pp
2023/24 (final)	59%	79%	-20 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	45%	79%	-34 pp

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)	6.2%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.5%	5.9%	Above

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)	18.9%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	20.4%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	26.5%	16.2%	Above

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



© Crown copyright