

Sharpness Primary School

Address: New Town, Berkeley, Gloucestershire, GL13 9NU

Unique reference number (URN): 115526

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 

Attendance is a top priority. The school provides parents and carers with clear guidance to help pupils attend school as often as they should. Leaders keep a close eye on trends and contact families quickly when concerns arise. Overall, pupils attend school at similar rates to their peers nationally. However, a minority of pupils, including some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not consistently attend as well as they could. Although this group of pupils' attendance has improved, leaders have prioritised the further reduction of persistent absence.

Across the school, pupils behave well and show positive attitudes. Classrooms are typically calm, which helps pupils concentrate on their learning. Older pupils set a fine example to younger children by showing kindness and following the school's expectations. Pupils report that unkind behaviour, including bullying, is not tolerated. They trust staff to deal with any issues quickly.

Staff use thoughtful approaches, such as feelings charts, to encourage pupils to express their emotions. They have become skilled in supporting some pupils with complex SEND who sometimes struggle to manage their behaviour. Staff handle these situations sensitively and work with external professionals when needed. As a result, behaviour incidents continue to reduce.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal development programme helps pupils grow into confident and responsible young people. Pupils learn what it means to be a good friend and why honesty and respect matter. Staff encourage pupils to talk about their feelings and to use simple tools, such as mindfulness activities or worry boxes, when they need support. Pupils say that this is a school where they feel listened to and well cared for.

Pupils learn about fundamental British values and what makes people unique, in an age-appropriate way. They talk thoughtfully about respecting differences and understanding what makes each person unique. Pupils explain that the school message is to 'treat others how you expect to be treated'. Staff foster pupils' appreciation of different cultures and social issues, including by holding events, such as Diwali, and studying books about homelessness.

Through the school's personal, social and health education curriculum, pupils learn important knowledge, such as how to stay safe online, how to resolve conflicts and how to look after their physical health. Many enjoy taking part in the morning run, which helps them start the day on a positive note. Older pupils learn about topics such as consent, challenging unfairness and what to do if they see unkind behaviour. This prepares them well for growing up in modern Britain.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities that build confidence and spark new interests. For instance, 'anti-bullying week', 'road safety week' and Remembrance activities teach pupils about respect, kindness and their role in the community. Clubs, sports, music lessons,

on-site swimming and residential visits give pupils opportunities to try new things and develop their talents. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities can fully participate.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

A considerable proportion of pupils have not secured the basic writing skills expected for their age. The quality of their writing varies too much, particularly in spelling, sentence construction, handwriting and presentation. This affects pupils' confidence and makes it harder for some, including those who need to catch up or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to write fluently. Leaders have introduced a new writing curriculum to address this, but the changes are very recent. Therefore, it is too soon to see the full impact on pupils' current learning. Additionally, in some wider curriculum subjects, such as history and art, pupils struggle to recall previous learning, which limits how securely they build knowledge over time.

Despite these challenges, most pupils achieve well in external tests in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2, including in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The curriculum is not taught consistently well across the school. In some subjects, learning activities are not closely matched to the ambitious curriculum aims, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. At times, expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. This limits how well pupils progress through the curriculum and produce high-quality work. However, teachers typically demonstrate secure subject knowledge. When staff model learning effectively, pupils grasp ideas fully. For example, younger pupils develop their mathematical knowledge, and use practical resources confidently to find fractions. Pupils in key stage 2 deepen their understanding of English, including plots and characters, through high-quality discussions.

The curriculum covers a broad range of subjects. In the past year, leaders have set out more clearly the knowledge that pupils should learn and when they should learn it. Leaders have rightly recognised that the curriculum has not been designed as well as it could have been to cater for pupils in the school's mixed-age classes.

Staff teach the school's phonics programme very well. Pupils quickly learn the sounds they need to read. Those who fall behind receive prompt support to keep up. Staff introduce pupils to rich and ambitious vocabulary, including through the stories they share.

Early years

Needs attention 

Some children, particularly those who need more help to develop their communication and language skills, do not consistently receive timely support. This hinders their ability to

securely build their knowledge and skills. Occasionally, staff do not engage children in high-quality conversations to develop their understanding. At times, staff do not provide children with learning opportunities that will enable them to progress through the curriculum as well as they could.

Staff design the curriculum around children's interests and knowledge gaps. For example, activities using scissors and dough build children's hand strength and dexterity. The outdoor provision encourages children to explore nature and build curiosity, for example by using binoculars to identify birds.

Children learn phonics from the start of the year. Staff provide opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their learning, including in the outdoor environment. Through the stories they read, children get to recap and deepen their understanding of key vocabulary, such as 'passenger' and 'adventure'.

Staff work closely with families to make sure every child settles well and feels part of the class from the beginning. Many children leave the early years ready for Year 1. Some children need more support to secure basic skills, such as writing.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Leaders do not check the impact of additional support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with enough rigour. As a result, they do not know whether this support improves pupils' learning. Some approaches remain in place for too long and do not secure the essential skills pupils require, particularly in writing. However, leaders identify pupils who may need additional help, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. They understand individual pupils' needs and seek specialist advice when needed.

In spite of the areas that require strengthening, leaders promote an inclusive, caring culture. Pupils feel valued and part of the community. Staff show real dedication to supporting those with the highest levels of SEND, helping them to attend school and to make important steps in their development. For example, training has developed staff's skills in using communication tools, so pupils can take part in school life as fully as possible.

Leaders have developed an appropriate pupil premium strategy that provides for pupils' academic and pastoral needs. Targeted assistance, such as extra help to learn to read, enables pupils to keep up. Leaders make sure that financial disadvantage does not prevent pupils from taking part in clubs, trips or enriching experiences.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The changes that leaders have introduced to improve pupils' experiences of school have not been in place for long enough to have had an impact. In some aspects of their work, leaders do not identify and act on priorities as well as they could. Governors do not consistently challenge and support leaders robustly about how effectively the curriculum helps pupils learn, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means that some weaknesses are not addressed swiftly enough.

Nonetheless, leaders, with the support of the local authority, remain committed to improving the school. They have identified sensible priorities, such as strengthening staff expertise, improving writing and tracking the progress of pupils with SEND more rigorously.

Governors share leaders' vision and carry out their responsibilities appropriately. They act in pupils' best interests. For example, they ensure that additional funding has a positive impact on pupils. Governors make sure that financial or social disadvantage do not limit pupils' chances of success. They also provide suitable challenge to leaders around pupils' attendance and to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Leaders and governors give careful thought to staff workload in this small school. They put in place measures, such as a dedicated wellbeing day, to help reduce some of the pressures on staff. Most staff speak positively about working at the school. They value the training they receive and feel supported in carrying out their roles.

Many parents and carers praise the warm 'community feel' and welcoming atmosphere the school provides. They recognise the nurturing relationships staff build with pupils.

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

Sharpness is a friendly and welcoming school. Each morning begins on a positive note as staff greet pupils and families warmly at the gate. This calm, caring start helps everyone settle quickly for the day ahead. Pupils describe the school as a happy place where they feel valued and safe.

The school's 'SHARP' values guide pupils to be 'responsible' and 'proud' of who they are. Pupils trust adults to listen to them and respond if they have any worries. This nurturing culture contributes to their regular attendance.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They speak confidently about their achievements, particularly in music and sports. For example, pupils learn to play the trumpet and take part in cross-country events. By the end of Year 6, most achieve well in reading and mathematics. However, from the early years onwards, too many pupils do not secure the basic writing knowledge they need. Teaching does not consistently address gaps in pupils' writing, including letter formation, spelling or sentence accuracy. This slows the pace at which some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, become fluent, confident writers and affects their ability to learn the curriculum.

Around the school, pupils behave sensibly and show courtesy towards adults and one another. Bullying is uncommon. Regardless of age, pupils mix happily together, enjoying games such as 'What's the time, Mr Wolf?' Older pupils take pride in supporting their Reception class buddies. A highlight is the weekly celebration assembly where staff reward pupils' efforts and successes with certificates.

Pupils learn to be responsible and safe citizens. First-aid training gives them practical life skills, while lessons on water and road safety help them navigate risks in the community.

Pupils enjoy debating issues and exploring moral dilemmas. These experiences allow them to develop confidence, character and respect for others.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen the consistency of teaching so that pupils secure the intended knowledge across subjects and produce high-quality work.
 - Leaders should improve pupils' writing across the school so that more pupils secure their basic skills in spelling, sentence construction, handwriting and presentation from the early years to Year 6.
 - Leaders should strengthen their oversight of the impact of additional support, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), so that provision is well matched to pupils' needs and improves achievement from the early years onwards.
 - Leaders should continue to improve attendance by rigorously addressing the persistent absence of a minority of pupils.
 - Governors should increase the depth of challenge about the effectiveness of the curriculum, particularly for vulnerable pupils and those with SEND, so that leaders are held fully to account for improving outcomes across the school.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Sara Matthews.

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 deputy headteacher and other school staff during the inspection.

The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Helen Buckingham

Lead inspector:

Dale Burr, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Wendy Hanrahan, 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 27 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

114

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

140

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)

19.30%

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

4.39%

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

11.40%

Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to 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	71%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	60%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	83%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	76%	60%	Above

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	82%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	80%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	92%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	76%	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	76%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	65%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	83%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	82%	71%	Above

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	80%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	75%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	92%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	76%	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	S	46%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
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	S	62%	S
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	S	59%	S
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	S	60%	S
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	S	68%	S
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	S	80%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
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	S	78%	S
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	S	80%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

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

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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)	5.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.2%	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)	22.2%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	23.5%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	18.2%	16.2%	Close to average

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.

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