

Willow Tree Community Primary School

Wetherby Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG2 7SG

Inspection dates 4–5 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Academic standards have not risen quickly enough since the previous inspection. They remain below average by the end of Year 6.
- Not enough pupils make the progress expected of them or better in Key Stage 2, particularly in writing.
- Pupils' work in books confirms that they are not always required to work hard in lessons. Therefore, teaching over time is not good enough, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- The gaps in attainment between pupils supported by the pupil premium and all other pupils are not closing rapidly enough.
- Activities do not always challenge pupils sufficiently, including the most able. The pace at which they learn is often too slow.
- Behaviour is not good because too many pupils, particularly boys, become inattentive and restless in lessons.
- Leaders, including governors, do not monitor the impact of the use of the pupil premium funding closely enough.
- Actions identified in the school's improvement plans are not always sharp enough.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils with a disability or special educational needs make good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors, demonstrate drive and resilience. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated. The proportion of good teaching is steadily increasing and the school is now showing signs of improvement.
- Progress is rising throughout the school. Standards are now average by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Attendance is above average.
- Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to be good.
- Pupils are courteous and respectful towards one another. They enjoy coming to school and report feeling safe. Almost all parents agree.
- Pupils confirm that bullying is rare and any is always dealt with effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons, or part lessons, delivered by 18 teachers. Four of these lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and two deputy headteachers. In addition, the inspectors listened to pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 read.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils, teachers and six representatives from the governing body. A telephone conversation was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered 128 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as four letters from parents. They also spoke to a number of parents before the start of the school day.
- Information from 18 staff questionnaires was also considered as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school’s plans for improvement and also examined documents relating to the safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- A range of other evidence was also scrutinised by inspectors, including pupils’ current and previous work in books and the school’s own data and monitoring records of how well pupils progress in their learning.

Inspection team

Paul Plumridge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Steven Goldsmith

Additional Inspector

Henry Moreton

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Willow Tree School is a very large primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus, who are disabled or supported with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speaks English as an additional language is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school opened in April 2011, following the amalgamation of the nursery, infant and junior schools that shared the same site. The current headteacher was previously the headteacher of the infant school.
- The school has an on-site swimming pool. Pupils have weekly lessons with a qualified instructor starting from Year 1 and continuing through to Year 5.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it becomes consistently good or better, particularly in writing in Key Stage 2, by:
 - ensuring activities always challenge pupils, including the most able, so that they learn at a fast pace and display consistently positive attitudes to learning
 - ensuring all teachers hold high expectations of what pupils can achieve so that pupils are required to work hard in all lessons
 - ensuring pupils always have sufficient opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subjects, as well as in English
 - ensuring pupils' handwriting and overall presentation of work are always of a high standard
 - ensuring pupils always respond to teachers' marking comments so their learning accelerates at a faster pace.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - building on the recent improvements secured by leaders in the quality of teaching so that it becomes consistently good and more is outstanding
 - ensuring the school's current action plans are always sharply focused to secure faster rates of improvement
 - monitoring closely the impact of the pupil premium funding so that the progress of pupils entitled to the funding accelerates and gaps in their attainment close rapidly
 - ensuring the support provided for pupils who have a disability or special educational need is monitored closely and secures good or better progress.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- In 2013, the overall standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 were below average. Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements in some areas, but the progress of all groups, particularly boys and those supported by the pupil premium, is still not good.
- Children enter the Nursery class with skills below those typical for this age range. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this continues through Key Stage 1. Standards are now average by the end of Year 2 in all subjects.
- Changes to staff and some weak teaching in the recent past have had a negative effect on pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2, particularly in writing. Leadership is tackling this with great determination. However, despite the school's information about pupils' progress showing that an increasing number of pupils are making better progress than before, this pattern is not yet well established.
- Since 2011, pupils' attainment in writing has declined. Recent improvements are evident but not enough pupils make good progress, particularly those who are the most able. Consequently, not enough pupils reach the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6. This is because they are not always given sufficient opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subjects in addition to English.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is not yet good, despite recent improvements. Too often, activities do not move pupils' learning on at a fast enough pace.
- In Key Stage 2, while pupils' achievement is stronger in reading than other subjects, it varies from year-to-year. In 2012, pupils made good progress, but this was not sustained in 2013, when not enough pupils made better than the progress expected of them. During this inspection, pupils were seen attempting to read books which were too hard for their ability level.
- The proportion of pupils aged six who achieve the national expectation in a check of their understanding of the sounds that letters make (known as phonics) is improving, but remains below average. Standards for boys and those pupils supported by the pupil premium are particularly low.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and supported by the pupil premium do not make fast enough progress. Hence, the gaps in their attainment and their peers are not closing quickly enough. In 2013, the standards reached by this group in English and mathematics were, on average, 14 months behind other pupils in the school. Evidence provided by the school indicates that gaps continue to widen from Year 4 onwards.
- Over time, pupils with a disability or special educational needs do not make good progress, although this is beginning to improve.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement, particularly at Key Stage 2. Pupils are not always required to work hard enough in lessons. This is because teachers' expectations about both the quality and quantity of work that pupils are required to produce are not always high enough.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Teachers plan stimulating activities that are at just the correct level for the children's learning needs. They build on children's interests so that they are eager to learn. Adults, including teaching assistants, support small groups well. In the Nursery class, children were observed developing their rhyming skills through the context of 'Humpty Dumpty' and 'Jack and Jill'. They were thoroughly engrossed in the activities and made good progress.
- The presentation of pupils' work is too varied. While some work is neatly presented, particularly in mathematics books, poor handwriting coupled with untidy presentation in some books demonstrates a lack of pride. School leaders have accurately identified this as an area for improvement.

- The quality of teaching is steadily improving and a greater proportion is now good. However, these improvements are not fast enough in Key Stage 2 and, over time, teaching has not provided sufficient challenge to pupils. The most able pupils, in particular, have not been stretched to make the best possible progress, particularly in writing.
- Teachers' marking shows they are becoming increasingly skilled at identifying next steps in pupils' learning. However, these comments do not always accelerate learning because pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to read and address them. This slows their progress over time in some classes.
- No outstanding teaching was seen during the course of the inspection. The school's own records and the work in pupils' books, confirms that the teaching seen by inspectors was representative of what typically happens.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively in the majority of lessons. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable are fully supported in a manner that is sympathetic to their needs and so they engage well in their learning.
- The school has recently changed its policy on homework. Most parents are happy with homework but a few raise concerns that it is not appropriate for their child's age.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In half of all lessons observed during the inspection, pupils' behaviour was not good enough. Although low-level disruption is rare, too often, pupils, particularly boys, quickly lose focus and become restless. This is because the level of challenge provided by teachers is not high enough and the pace at which they learn is slow.
- Teachers do not always encourage pupils to take great pride in their work. The school has only recently identified the need for a standard handwriting and presentation policy.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Almost all parents agree that their child feels safe in school. Pupils confirm this and state that bullying is rare and always dealt with quickly. They demonstrate good awareness of the various types of bullying, including cyber bullying.
- Pupils confirm that instances of racial or homophobic language are very rare. There have been no recorded incidents during this academic year.
- A group of pupils in Year 6 outlined how the school helps them to keep safe. For example, they confidently talked about the importance of keeping personal details private when using the internet.
- Around the school, pupils are polite, friendly and treat each other and adults with respect. They play harmoniously with one another on the playground.
- Attendance is consistently above average. The school's procedures and policies for raising attendance and punctuality are effective.
- The number of occasions where pupils are excluded from school for short periods has fallen over the last three years and is now low. High-quality support and interventions are put in place to support the needs of the most vulnerable pupils.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher is passionate about the school. She provides a clear plan for the future that unites staff. Supported effectively by other leaders, her determined actions are steadily raising the quality of teaching across the school. Instances of inadequate teaching have been eradicated and more teaching is now good. Therefore, pupils' achievement is beginning to rise in Key Stage 2.
- A system is now in place to check on the quality of teaching. Middle leaders have opportunities to contribute towards this and have an accurate view of the progress pupils make.
- Leaders' plans for improvement accurately identify the necessary priority areas, for example, to

raise standards in writing. However, not all of the resulting actions and timescales are sharply focused. This prevents the quality of teaching from improving at a faster pace.

- Leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is targeted towards pupils who are eligible. However, they do not sufficiently check on its impact. As a result, gaps in attainment do not narrow quickly enough between these pupils and other groups in the school. Although leaders are firmly committed to tackling discrimination, this somewhat restricts their ability to promote equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- Leaders acknowledge that pupils who have a disability or special educational needs do not make good progress. Inspectors found that this is because the support they receive is not always effective nor checked on closely enough. This has begun to be addressed by leaders. School data indicates that pupils' achievement is beginning to improve.
- The school's curriculum is broad and enriching. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in music, singing, art, sports and extra-curricular activities. Pupils in most year groups benefit from weekly swimming lessons. In 2012, the school represented Harrogate at the North Yorkshire School Games and achieved first place overall.
- The school's allocation of the new primary school sport funding is being used effectively. Specialists, including those from local secondary schools, have started developing the skills of the school's staff, with a particular focus on the teaching of gymnastics. The impact of this work is too early to measure but aims to provide long-term sustainability in this area.
- Most parents and staff hold positive views about the school.
- The local authority is providing the school with extensive support to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are often seen in school and play an active role. They are highly committed and have supported the work of school leaders in overcoming the significant challenges the school faced following amalgamation in April 2011. However, they do not yet provide the sufficient levels of challenge to school leaders required to secure improvements at a fast enough pace. Although they understand how the pupil premium funding is spent, they are less clear about its subsequent effect on pupils' achievement. As a result, they do not hold leaders fully to account for how well pupils are doing. Governors have ensured that there is strong performance management now in place, linking any increases in pay to teachers' performance in the classroom. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121424
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	430915

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	535
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Beasley
Headteacher	Helen Davey
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2012
Telephone number	01423 883551
Fax number	01423 886592
Email address	admin@willowtree.n-yorks.sch.uk

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