

Willow Green Academy

Hampden Close, Knottingley, West Yorkshire, WF11 8PT

Inspection dates

18–19 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good. From starting points below those typically expected for their age, pupils make good progress across the academy and reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6.
- Most teaching is good and there is some that is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and teachers expect pupils to do their best at all times.
- Excellent support is provided for pupils who have special educational needs and those who are eligible for the pupil premium funding. This helps them to make similar progress to other pupils.
- Behaviour is good in the classroom and around the academy. Relationships between pupils and adults are very positive and, as a result, pupils work hard and want to do well.
- Pupils, parents and staff agree that pupils feel safe and that they know how to keep themselves safe.
- Senior leaders, including governors, inspire staff to work well together for the good of the pupils. As a result, improvements in teaching, achievement and behaviour have been made since the previous inspection.
- The bright and vibrant displays around the academy and in all classrooms celebrate many examples of the high-quality work pupils produce and show the wide range of subjects they cover.
- The academy's well-planned programme of topics and themes makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to accelerate further pupils' progress.
- Over time, pupils in Key Stage 1 and the most able pupils throughout the academy have not achieved as well as they might.
- Governors do not always receive the clearest information about the performance of different groups of pupils.
- Teachers do not always give pupils enough time to respond to the advice they give them about how they can improve their work.
- Teachers sometimes pay too little attention to inaccuracies in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 18 lessons and parts of lessons were observed by inspectors. Teachers were observed at least once and two lessons were observed jointly with the head of academy and the assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of staff, pupils, parents, three members of the executive advisory board (including a parent governor) and two representatives from the School Partnership Academies Trust.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to 12 staff questionnaires. They considered information from previous academy surveys carried out with parents and pupils, and 19 responses to the on-line questionnaire Parent View.
- The inspectors reviewed work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They observed pupils moving around inside and outside the academy and at different times in the day.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and considered a number of documents, including the academy's own evaluation of its performance, the academy improvement plan, minutes of meetings of the executive advisory board and reviews of the academy undertaken by external agencies.

Inspection team

Helen Gaunt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Halford	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Willow Green Academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is average while the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- In 2013, the academy met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school became an academy on 1 August 2012, joining the School Partnership Academies Trust.
- There have been a number of changes to staff in the last two years. The former headteacher retired in August 2013 and the current head of academy took up post on 1 September 2013. The school is supported by an executive headteacher, who works with several academies within the Trust.
- The academy is nearing the end of a major building project.
- Within this report, the term governor is used to refer to a member of the Executive Advisory Board of the academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so it is all consistently good, and more is outstanding, in order to drive progress at an even faster pace, particularly in Key Stage 1 and for the most able pupils, by ensuring:
 - teachers always point out inaccuracies in spelling, punctuation and grammar in pupils' work
 - teachers always give pupils enough time to respond to the advice they provide about how to improve their work
 - the most able pupils are quickly moved on to harder work in lessons, where appropriate.
- Improving the effectiveness of leadership and management even further by ensuring that all information that the executive advisory board receives about different groups of pupils is detailed and clear.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start the academy in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills, knowledge and understanding below those expected for their age in many areas of learning, particularly communication and language and some aspects of personal and social development. Good-quality teaching and care help children to make good progress. As a result, now most children reach a good level of development across the main areas of learning and join Year 1 with age-appropriate skills.
- Pupils acquire secure skills in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) because these skills are taught well and systematically. This results in higher proportions reaching the expected level in the phonics screening check in Year 1 than is the case nationally. This solid grounding in early reading skills helps pupils to develop confidence in reading that promises to serve them well throughout their time in the academy and beyond.
- Overall standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen over the last two years and are now average in reading, writing and mathematics. The academy's own records show that pupils in the current Year 2 are making better progress and are on track to exceed previous results. After a period where there has been some underachievement in this key stage, this represents good improvement.
- In 2013, when they left Year 6 pupils had reached average standards in all subjects, which represents good progress from their starting points. Current academy data, supported by inspection findings from the observation of pupils' work in lessons and the analysis of pupils' books, show that pupils in the current Year 6 are making even better progress and are on track to exceed previous results.
- In the past, pupils' attainment in writing, across the academy, had been lower than in reading and mathematics. This is no longer the case and, by the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards in writing that are in line with other subjects. This has been achieved through a whole-academy approach to providing more imaginative topics for pupils to write about while, at the same time, encouraging them to use a wider range of vocabulary. However, some lack of accuracy is still evident in some pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well in a range of ways. The academy works effectively with specialists and outside agencies. Teachers and teaching assistants know the children well. This means that potential problems are spotted early and measures put in place to ensure pupils in this group achieve well, as do other groups in the academy.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding well to ensure that gaps in attainment between eligible pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and their classmates begin to narrow as soon as children join in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that, by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, gaps in achievement have either narrowed or closed entirely. For example, in writing last year, the gap in the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other pupils in the academy was four months and it has closed completely for the current Year 6. In both reading and mathematics, the gaps have narrowed substantially from 2013 and are now less than six months in each subject.
- Pupils who are identified as having lower reading ages than their chronological age benefit from additional support. This additional support helps them to quickly make up any lost ground.
- There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. However, they achieve well because there is a strong emphasis on developing and using the correct vocabulary, for example, saying 'adjective' rather than 'describing word' from a very young age.
- In the past, the attainment of some of the most able pupils has not been as high as it has nationally in mathematics, in all years, and at the end of Key Stage 1 in writing. Improvements in teaching, including better use of pupils' progress information to plan work that challenges the most able, are accelerating progress for this group of pupils. However, inspectors noted instances where the most able pupils were not able to move on naturally with their learning

without having to wait for further instructions from the teacher. When this happens, the pace of learning slows and they are not able to make rapid progress.

- The academy is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and is already increasing the rate of progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 and some of the most able pupils.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. The amount of good and outstanding teaching has increased over the last two years but there is still a small proportion that requires improvement.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children make good progress because teachers identify early exactly at which stage each child is and where any additional support is needed. For example, a speech and language therapist is employed to help children who have particular difficulty in speaking and/or sounding letters correctly. Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing children's language skills, especially their reading, to prepare them for the challenges of Year 1. Questions are used to check and extend children's understanding..
- Pupils have clear targets for improving their learning. Exciting and imaginative tasks are planned which build effectively on pupils' prior learning. Computers and tablets are used regularly to reinforce and develop pupils' skills, for example, practising their sequencing skills in the nursery and solving mathematical problems in Year 6.
- Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning and collaborate well with class teachers. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for individuals or small groups within lessons and run purposeful sessions outside the classroom for pupils who are struggling. This extra well-targeted support ensures these pupils make the same progress as their classmates.
- When learning is at its best, pupils' imagination is captured and their deeper thinking is developed well. For example, in science, pupils considered the journey food makes through the human body. They identified and agreed their responses and labelled body parts accurately. Pupils were enthusiastic and concentration levels were extremely high. As a result, they made rapid progress.
- Work in pupils' books shows pupils making clear progress showing that teaching is good over time. Pupils' work is marked regularly and generally to a high standard. Teachers add helpful and positive comments. Guidance is often given to tell pupils how they can improve their work. However, pupils are not always given time to respond to advice given by teachers, nor is any lack of their accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar always sufficiently corrected.
- Where teaching is not as strong, some of the most able pupils' progress is limited and they are not able to reach the higher levels of which they are capable.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy being at the academy. Pupils are smart in their appearance and wear their academy uniform with pride. They also ensure they look after academy property. They present the work in their books neatly, but they do not always take enough care with spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- There are very good induction processes into the Nursery class, which ensures children settle quickly into academy routines, and learn how to behave. Children are well cared for in a secure learning environment.
- The majority of pupils attend well and arrive on time. Attendance has risen since the previous inspection and, so far this year, is broadly average. There are effective systems for checking on, and following up, any pupils who are persistently absent. As a result, the numbers of pupils who do not attend regularly is reducing year-on-year. Staff work well with families to develop an understanding of how crucial it is for pupils' academic success that their children attend regularly.

- Pupils have a very clear understanding of the academy's behaviour policy and the sanctions and rewards in place. The use of attendance charts outside all classrooms is highly effective. Pupils are competitive and encourage each other to behave well so that they can accrue more merit points for their House.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example, as Playground Pals and in the Book Corner, as assembly and music monitors. These pupils keep a book, in which they are awarded stamps by the pupil council if they are judged to have done a good job. Rewards are given when a certain number of stamps have been collected.
- Parents, staff and pupils who expressed their views agree that behaviour is good. This is also evidenced in the academy's records. When any incidents do occur, these are dealt with effectively and appropriate actions taken.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders make sure pupils are safe in the academy. Entry to the premises is well managed and staff who are recruited are checked rigorously.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and have a clear understanding about potential dangers, including using the internet and talking to strangers.
- Pupils say that there is little bullying. They have a good understanding about different forms of bullying, including physical, verbal and cyber-bullying. They know who they can talk to if they have a concern or problem. One pupil told inspectors, 'This is a really open place and you can talk to any adult if you want to'.

The leadership and management are good

- The quality of leadership and management at all levels throughout the academy is good. This is evidenced by pupils' improved achievement, attendance and behaviour and better teaching, over the past two years.
- The head of academy's strong leadership and effective management have established high staff morale. Leaders, managers and governors are strongly committed to continuing to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils and identify the actions needed by evaluating the academy's strengths and weaknesses accurately. Clear development plans are in place and reviewed on a regular basis.
- Middle leaders have been effective in working with teachers to improve the quality of planning and resources, which has led to improved achievement. For example, the leader of literacy has worked successfully to ensure pupils' writing is accurately assessed and is now working on behalf of the local authority and the partnership of academies to moderate the assessment of writing across academies.
- The tracking and recording of information on pupils' progress is detailed. The information on different groups of pupils, collated by head of academy, is comprehensive and used to identify pupils who are in danger of falling behind. This information is then shared with teachers and support assistants who provide additional teaching as needed, but is not always shared in such detail with governors.
- Pupils who join the academy partway through their primary education are assessed early and provided with extra help immediately if needed. Good teaching then ensures they make good progress along with other pupils who have been at the academy longer.
- There are very robust systems in place to ensure the quality of teaching continually improves. Leaders set targets for teachers which clearly outline how much progress pupils need to make. By observing lessons, looking at planning and pupils' work in books, leaders give teachers helpful and detailed points on how to improve their performance. There is a wide range of training opportunities to support teachers in making those improvements and meeting their targets.
- The lively and creative curriculum helps pupils achieve well. Exciting topics, such as 'The Rainforest', 'Natural Disasters' and 'Crime and Punishment', are often linked to reading books. This strongly promotes pupils' literacy skills. Very high-quality displays are also the norm in every classroom and provide a rich and stimulating learning environment for pupils, where examples of

their work are celebrated. A wide range of visits and visitors contribute to pupils' learning and provide memorable experiences. Pupils appreciate and are involved in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well throughout the curriculum. When they write stories or have discussions, pupils are encouraged to consider the impact of their actions on others. They develop very good social skills. Regular assemblies, visits to museums and mosques, and learning about different religions, together with learning about other countries, make sure that pupils have a good understanding and appreciation of other cultures and practices.
- The academy uses its primary school sports funding well to provide additional physical education lessons led by sports coaches. Links have been developed with Castleford Rugby Club to provide extra lunchtime activities. Teachers are being trained so they are better equipped to teach physical education lessons. There is now a wider range of after-clubs that take place outside of normal hours and more competitive games. Pupils also have the opportunity to become Sports Leaders. All of this is leading to pupils' improved physical skills, health and well-being, and their increased participation in local competitions.
- Leaders have successfully encouraged more parents to become involved in their child's learning at home through a range of interesting parent workshops and the involvement of parent helpers in small group work during the day. This is increasing the rate of progress some learners make in their reading and in mathematics.
- The School Partnership Academies Trust has confidence in the leadership and management of the academy. The Trust has provided valuable support, which has been effective and appreciated by leaders. It keeps a careful eye on how well the academy is doing and provides challenge and support as needed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Over the past three years, governors have worked hard to develop a positive working relationship with the School Partnership Academies Trust, in order to build leadership capacity for the new Academy. They have also overseen a major building project, which is now nearing completion, as well as supporting academy leaders in securing improvements in achievement, teaching and behaviour. Governors strongly support the academy and value the leadership of senior leaders. The governing body is well informed by the head of academy and visits made by the governors to classes, but it does not always receive information that has been fully analysed according to the different groups of pupils. However, governors know the academy well and have a good knowledge of the academy's strengths and improvement priorities. Governors are aware of how the academy is using its additional funds and the impact these have on pupils' achievement. They have been trained in child protection matters, and safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements so that pupils and staff are safe. Governors monitor carefully the performance of teachers. Teachers' pay will be linked to their performance in the classroom from September 2014.

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	138401
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	425691

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	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	C Dobbins
Headteacher	Ann Morritt
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01977 722510
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Email address	info@willowgreen.org.uk

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