

Willow Academy

Alston Road, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN4 7EZ

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Although improving, the quality of teaching remains inconsistent and consequently, not all pupils achieve well, particularly the most and the least able and disadvantaged pupils.
- Teaching has improved so none is inadequate and some good features are evident but the high turnover of staff means that these improvements are not fully embedded.
- The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils are variable because senior leaders have not checked the impact of their actions, including their use of the extra funding to support these pupils, rigorously enough.
- Assessment is not always accurate and information is not consistently used effectively to set high expectations for all pupils.
- Pupils' learning behaviour requires improvement because occasional low-level misbehaviour disrupts some lessons.
- It is only recently that the skills of middle leaders have been developed; some middle leaders are new into their roles and have yet to impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Self-evaluation has improved but not all leaders have the skills needed to accurately evaluate the impact of improvements. They do not all provide precise, effective guidance and support to help other teachers to improve their work.
- The interim executive committee, which holds responsibility for governance, has a clear overview of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. The committee knows where further improvement is required but does not have clear systems for leaders to report formally on the impact of their work.
- The early years requires improvement because leaders have not checked that the teaching and provision enable all children, particularly those for whom the school receives additional funding, to make the best progress they can.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are very positive about their time at the academy. They say they feel safe and are well looked after. The arrangements to keep pupils safe are good.
- Behaviour in the playgrounds has improved and pupils say there is now more for them to do at lunchtime.
- Parents' confidence in the academy has improved. Most indicate they are pleased with the recent improvements.
- Support from the sponsor has helped to improve the quality of teaching. New systems and procedures have been introduced. This leaves the academy well placed to build on recent improvements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 as a monitoring inspection. It was turned into a full inspection and deemed a section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons. Almost all teachers were observed at least once and some more than once. Some lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Work in pupils' books was scrutinised.
- Inspectors visited small-group teaching sessions and assemblies. They listened to pupils read, visited an assembly and observed playtime and lunchtime activities. They observed pupils' behaviour at break times, lunchtimes and around the school.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff, pupils and representatives from the sponsor, the Wakefield City Academy Trust, who also represented the interim executive committee.
- Inspectors took account of 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own recent consultation with parents. They also met with parents before and after school.
- A number of documents were examined, including information about pupils' progress and school improvement.
- Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Amraz Ali, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Gaskill

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well below that of most schools. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Early years provision in reception is all full time.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Willow Primary School converted to become an academy on 1 April 2012. At its previous section 5 inspection in April 2012 it was judged to require special measures. Since that time, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors has carried out four monitoring inspections. In August 2014, it became a sponsored academy with the Wakefield City Academy Trust.
- There have been significant changes in the leadership and management of the school and staff since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in order to raise achievement by:
 - ensuring the accuracy of assessment, including initial assessments, so that as pupils start school and when they move to new classes, no time is lost in their learning
 - making sure teachers use assessment information effectively so that work is set at just the right level to challenge all abilities, particularly for the most able, least able and disadvantaged pupils
 - raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in terms of quality and quantity of work so that work in books is of a consistent standard.
- Improve pupils' behaviour in classrooms so that it is consistently good by:
 - clarifying for pupils exactly what good learning behaviour is
 - using more consistently the procedures contained within the school's behaviour policy.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership to improve the academy by:
 - ensuring middle leaders have the knowledge and skills they need to accurately evaluate the impact of their actions on teaching and learning
 - ensuring that middle leaders are able to provide effective guidance and support to their colleagues in order to improve teaching
 - ensuring that the early years leader checks carefully on the impact of teaching and provision on all groups of children, particularly those for whom the school receives additional funding ensuring that there are clear systems for leaders to report regularly the impact of their work to governors.

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

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior leaders have successfully brought about improvements to achievement and teaching. Staff morale has improved and staff have worked well together to bring about improvements. Consequently, attainment is now significantly above average and teaching is improving. However, the high turnover of staff means these improvements are fragile. Senior leaders are clear that more work is needed if improvements are to be sustained.
- Leaders and teachers are engaging well with the new sponsor and have begun to use new procedures, such as systems to track pupils' progress and the management of staff performance. Teachers have clear performance management targets linked to both whole school and personal improvement priorities. Underperformance is challenged but there are clear arrangements to support individual teachers. The sponsor has helped with the recruitment of new middle leaders.
- A full complement of middle leaders is now in place, but some are very new and others have not developed the skills they need to accurately evaluate the impact of their work on teaching and pupils' achievement. Not all middle leaders have the skills they need to enable them to feed back to other teachers on the quality of their work or provide effective guidance and support to others.
- The accuracy of self-evaluation has improved. Senior leaders have a clear overview of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. This has contributed to identifying where improvement is needed and helped to target external support. However, the evaluation of the use and impact of the pupil premium funding has not been precise and has not helped to close the gap in attainment across the academy.
- The curriculum is a relative strength. It is broad and balanced, providing well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about a range of world religions and they are taught to respect people from all faiths and cultures. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of democracy are underdeveloped. The staff are in the process of adjusting the curriculum to reflect recent changes in national guidance.
- The primary school sport funding is used well to employ specialist coaching staff. Opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in a variety of sports and to broaden their experiences. There are strengths in the provision of after-school sports activities, which are valued by pupils and their parents. These are open to all pupils and reflect the academy's commitment to equality of opportunity. Pupils say they enjoy sport within physical education lessons, at lunchtimes and after school. This is contributing to developing their understanding of sport and exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle.
- The arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and contribute to the academy's good work to keep pupils safe.
- Parents are generally positive about the improvements at the academy. However, some express concerns about the impact of staff change on the pupils' learning. Some would welcome more information about their child's learning and greater access to teachers at the beginning and end of the day.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The responsibility for governance currently rests with the sponsor. An interim executive committee is in place made up of the chief executive officer and other board members from the trust and academy staff. Arrangements are underway for this to become a local governing body as part of the trust arrangements and elections for parent representatives are scheduled. Regular meetings mean that the interim executive committee has a clear understanding of the work of the academy and has been instrumental in targeting support for individual teachers. This has contributed to the improvements in teaching. The trust has supported with the recruitment of new staff and has helped to resolve some long-term staffing issues. The interim executive committee has access to a wide range of information about the quality of the academy's work, including information about pupil progress, the quality of teaching, performance management, rewards and how any underperformance is tackled. However, the arrangements for the headteacher, senior and middle leaders to report information about their work and its impact are underdeveloped.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. It is not good because teachers' time is sometimes spent dealing with low-level misbehaviour. Pupils and teachers are not always clear about what good learning behaviour is. In some classes, when the teacher is talking, pupils do not always sit and listen well, they

fiddle, lose concentration or become distracted. This means they do not always produce their best work.

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are best when they are busy completing tasks that make them think. For example, in one class pupils worked hard and improved their writing by adding better descriptions and word choices.
- The academy has a policy of rewarding good behaviour with praise and house points. However, the use of praise for the majority of pupils who behave well is scarce. Where praise is used well, little time is lost with teachers reminding pupils about the need to pay attention or to stop fiddling with pens and pencils.
- Pupils' behaviour in the playgrounds has improved. At lunchtime, the Key Stage 2 playground is divided into 'zones' for different activities. Structured activities are enjoyed by pupils and help pupils to behave well. Although a second playground has been created for the youngest pupils, they say they are unsure about when it is their turn to use this area and it is difficult for pupils in different year groups to play together.
- Pupils behave well when moving around the academy. They are polite and courteous with each other and visitors. Year 6 pupils are pleased with their new uniforms and feel very grown up wearing their blazers.
- Attendance is above the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Staff work hard to ensure pupils are safe. Pupils know how to keep safe. For example, older pupils know about the dangers associated with using the internet and cyber bullying.
- Improved behaviour and more space for pupils to play have led to a reduction in playground accidents.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Pupils say bullying is rare and, if it occurs, teachers and other adults deal with any problems promptly. Parents and pupils do not express any well-founded concerns about safety.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what is meant by bullying and different forms of bullying, including racist bullying. Pupils are accepting of others' differences. For example, a Year 6 pupil stated that pupils of different faiths and cultures got on well at the academy and everyone respected each other. Pupils were clear that if a pupil stated he wanted to become mummy when he grows up he would be treated with respect.
- A single central register is held electronically which details all of the checks that are conducted on the identity and suitability of staff. The designated teacher for child protection has attended appropriate training as have all members of staff.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved and none is inadequate. Although there are good elements, it remains inconsistent and this means that progress is not good for all pupils.
- The assessments of pupils' levels across the academy, including in the early years, are not consistently accurate and not all staff have confidence in each other's assessments. Consequently, time is spent re-assessing pupils when they move into new classes and this slows progress. Teachers are not consistently using what they know about pupils to set work that is always at just the right level for all abilities, particularly the most and least able in the class and disadvantaged pupils.
- In some lessons, work is pitched at appropriately challenging levels for pupils of all abilities. It is common for pupils to be presented with work at several levels of difficulty; bronze, silver, gold or platinum levels. This sometimes works well, for example, in a mathematics lesson where each pupil or group of pupils had work set on calculating the area of shapes, each pupil had just the right amount of challenge. However, in another mathematics lesson using a similar approach with bronze, silver and gold levels, pupils were allowed to self-select their level of difficulty. Consequently, not enough was expected of some pupils and some explained they always chose to complete the easy work and others stated the work was not challenging enough.
- Recording work in exercise books is helping pupils and their teachers to identify where progress has been made and where further work is needed. However, because the expectations of pupils are not always consistently high, sometimes work is incomplete or of a variable quality.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. For example, in a mathematics lesson the teacher was able to explain very clearly how to work out the area of a compound shape. Consequently, pupils were able to successfully calculate areas for themselves. In a Year 2 class, staff were confidently talking to pupils about 'graphemes' (the sounds represented by letters) and this helped pupils to understand how to read and

write words with the letter 'o' in that end in 'e'.

- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and pupils are keen to learn. Most pupils are interested in their work and listen well to their teachers' instructions and explanations. However, when pupils are not challenged some become distracted, particularly some boys.
- Reading is taught systematically across the academy with the youngest pupils benefitting from regular phonics lessons to teach them the relationship between letters and the sounds they represent. Pupils read regularly, individually and in groups. Most say they enjoy reading and are developing a love of books. Older pupils, for example, were able to identify authors they like or the styles of writing they prefer.
- The use of teaching assistants and other support staff in classes has improved. Some are deployed particularly well and make a positive contribution to the teaching of reading on a regular basis. However, not all support staff offer the strongest models of spoken and written language to pupils.
- There have been improvements to the teaching of writing and handwriting. However, some inconsistencies in the expectations of teachers mean that some handwriting is not always neat and well presented, particularly where pupils are less secure in how to produce joined-up handwriting.
- The quality of the marking and feedback to pupils about their work has improved. Pupils say they value verbal comments from teachers within lessons. Written comments acknowledge and praise what has been done well. In the best examples, pupils are given clear guidance for improving their next piece of work or directed to make improvements to the current piece of work. However, this is not always apparent in all books and comments are sometimes repeated on more than one occasion without any evidence of improvement to the current or next piece of work.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is not good because of variability in the quality of teaching over time, and in some instances, because teachers' expectations are not always high enough for all pupils. Work in pupils' books indicates that progress is improving but remains variable and related directly to the quality of teaching.
- The effectiveness with which pupils are taught about letters and sounds has improved. Consequently, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 reaching the expected standard in the national phonics check is above the national average. However, not all of those pupils who did not meet the standard in 2013 have done so by the end of Year 2.
- After dipping in 2013, standards at the end of Year 2 in 2014 improved to be well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, disadvantaged pupils do not do as well as their peers and are around three terms behind other pupils at the academy and are around a term and a half behind other pupils nationally.
- In 2014, attainment at the end of Year 6 continued to be well-above average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was around one term behind other pupils in the school in these subjects. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils was in line with other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics but was around a term behind in writing. These results represent at least expected progress overtime for most pupils and, for some, better than expected. However, although improving, the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs was not as strong as their peers.
- Across the academy there are gaps between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. These gaps and rates of progress vary from year group to year group. Although many disadvantaged pupils get extra help leaders have not checked very carefully on the impact of this work to ensure that all achieve as well as they could.
- Across the academy the inconsistent challenge for the most able pupils means that not all of these pupils make as much progress as they could. Effective teaching in Year 6 in 2014 helped the most able pupils who left to catch up and most who reached the higher Level 3 when they were in Key Stage 1 went on to reach a Level 5 or 6 in reading and mathematics. However, a few pupils did not reach the higher levels in writing.
- Over time, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making similar rates of progress as their classmates; inconsistent and variable. There are signs that the leadership of the special educational needs coordinator is starting to improve provision for these pupils but this has yet to impact on the progress overtime.

The early years provision**requires improvement**

- Although there are some strengths, particularly in the care of children, this area of the academy requires improvement because not all children make good progress. The assessment of what children know and can do when they join the academy is not secure and the children for whom the school receives additional funding do not always do as well as they could. Nevertheless, when they leave the Reception Year, most children have the skills and knowledge they need to join Year 1.
- Provision has improved. Children have access to a range of well-thought-out activities. New equipment has made the outdoor learning environment more interesting for the children. There is an appropriate balance between activities they may select alone and those directed by an adult.
- Teaching is improving and there is a clear focus on developing children's reading, writing and mathematics along with their speaking and listening skills. Children are taught how to hold pens and pencils and they learn to read and write new words. However, they do not always get the chance to practise writing in different parts of the classroom.
- Children's behaviour is good, as are the arrangements to keep them safe. Children are happy and well settled. They get along well together and they listen carefully to adults. They concentrate well and can complete some tasks on their own. They talk about shapes using the correct mathematical terms and generally have a good vocabulary and knowledge about the world around them.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the work of the new team. They are clear about areas for development. However, they have not checked specifically on the impact of the new team's work on the achievement of all learners, particularly the children for whom the school receives additional funding, whose progress is not as strong as their peers. Children's learning journeys show that children of average and above average ability make better progress than those who have special educational needs or those for whom the school receives additional funding.

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	138077
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	450813

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	416
Appropriate authority	The proprietor
Chair	Mike Ramsay CEO
Headteacher	Yvonne Buckley
Date of previous school inspection	23 April 2013
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