

Willowcroft Community School

Mereland Road, Didcot, OX11 8BA

Inspection dates 24–25 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- While achievement in Year 6 national tests was below average in reading and mathematics, (but in line with the average in writing) in 2014, pupils in other year groups made good progress from their starting points.
- Work in books and current tracking data show that pupils are now attaining standards in line with those seen nationally.
- Teachers understand what pupils can already do and set work which stretches pupils of all abilities for most of their lessons.
- Pupils are excited and motivated by the topics which combine subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils build good relationships and show respect and good manners. Their good behaviour and attitudes to work help them to make good progress. They show respect to adults and pupils, and are well mannered and courteous.
- Staff use the behaviour policy well to create a positive atmosphere for learning in all classes. They ensure that warm relationships help pupils to feel safe and ask for help when necessary.
- Following staffing changes the headteacher and governors have ensured that current stability has enabled pupils to make good and rapidly improving progress in all current year groups.
- Parents are very happy with the work of the academy and have many opportunities to work in it with their children.
- Leaders monitor pupils' progress and use this to judge the quality of teaching. They plan training activities which match the areas which need to improve.
- Governors undertake extensive training so that they can target finances to support improvement appropriately across the academy. They hold the academy to account for the progress pupils make.
- The learning environment and provision in the early years enable children to make good progress because teachers plan exciting activities based on their understanding of what children can already do. Children's play is used well to ensure that they enjoy learning. Their attainment has been of concern in the past, but they now achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons, the level of challenge of some tasks is not always well matched to the ability of all pupils.
- Not enough opportunities are currently offered for staff to observe the best practice in the academy.
- Some pupils have not yet developed a love of reading for pleasure.
- There is some inconsistency in staff expectations, particularly in the standard of presentation of work in books.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons, with six of these visits being in the company of senior leaders, and an assembly. They also looked at pupils’ workbooks.
- They observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons, around the academy, and at break and lunchtimes, and had a formal discussion with the academy council and informal discussions with other pupils.
- Account was taken of the 38 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and also of the 24 responses to staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors met with parents, the headteacher, other academy leaders, a group of governors and representatives of the Trust.
- Inspectors looked at academy documents, including information about pupils’ achievement, records of behaviour and attendance, records of monitoring, the academy’s self-evaluation, plans for improvement, and information relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Lynne Bradbury, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maggi Newton

Additional Inspector

Peter Thrussell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-size primary school
- Children attend full-time in the Reception class and part-time in the Nursery.
- The academy offers a before- and after-school care club which is free to those pupils eligible for the pupil premium as appropriate. This funding is extra financial support from the government for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals, or who are in the care of the local authority.
- Most pupils are White British and most pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor targets, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There have been some staffing difficulties in the last two years.
- The academy is a member of The Oxfordshire Primary Education Network Trust. The partner schools are Ladygrove Park Primary School, Manor School Didcot, St.John's Primary School and Cholsey Primary School.
- Willowcroft Community School converted to academy status on 1 June 2013. When the predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- A review of governance took place in February 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding in order to further accelerate pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that staff use their knowledge of what pupils already know to plan activities which stretch or support all pupils appropriately in all parts of their lessons
 - devising activities which will help pupils to develop a love of reading for pleasure
 - developing opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from the best practice within the academy.
- Raise behaviour and attitudes to outstanding by creating a consistency of expectations for all pupils, particularly in presenting the work in their books.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, governors and senior leaders took urgent action from the inception of the academy to establish high expectations and targets for improvement. This did not impact upon achievement in reading and mathematics in Year 6 in 2014 because of considerable staffing difficulties, but resulted in accelerated improvement in teaching and achievement across other year groups. Greater staffing stability has ensured that these improvements are now evident in the workbooks and assessment information in all year groups.
 - Leaders and governors check the work of the academy to identify appropriate areas for improvement and use the appraisal system to judge the quality of teaching against the progress made by pupils.
 - Subject leaders' monitoring and the subsequent plans have raised the quality of teaching through carefully chosen training. Leaders do not yet give sufficient opportunities for staff to learn from the best practice in the academy.
 - During the inspection, parents shared their high level of satisfaction and pride in the academy and the experiences and opportunities offered to their children.
 - Safeguarding policies meet national requirements and are rigorously implemented.
 - The academy's commitment to equal opportunities is demonstrated by the way in which finances are applied to ensure that pupils across a wide range of backgrounds, needs and abilities are able to make good progress. It successfully tackles any form of discrimination.
 - Additional funding effectively supports those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. Some of these pupils have a range of complex challenges. A learning mentor offers appropriate and effective support to help them to make the best possible progress. One-to-one teaching, small-group support and visits, and access to the before- and after-school club are now helping these pupils to make greater progress.
 - The primary school physical education and sports funding has provided extra coaching to train staff in the academy and to offer pupils a wide range of extra opportunities to develop their physical skills. They particularly enjoy karate, tag rugby, gymnastics and girls' and boys' football.
 - Pupils are highly motivated by the way in which subjects are combined into exciting topics which allow them to develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills in areas of high interest. Visits and visitors help pupils to understand the topics in everyday life.
 - The strong appreciation of traditional British values helps pupils to develop an understanding of tolerance and respect for all pupils across many different backgrounds. Pupils vote for representatives on the academy council and their team captains.
 - Pupils enjoy spiritual reflection in assemblies or in discussing important topics during their lessons. Moral issues in the academy give pupils the opportunity to develop an awareness of such concerns. They develop good social relationships through play and learning opportunities.
 - Pupils experience different faiths and cultures as they visit special places of worship. They enjoy learning about the backgrounds of pupils in the class who come from different heritages. They talk respectfully about people from diverse backgrounds.
 - Whole-class tuition with musical instruments helps pupils to explore the world of music, and high quality opportunities to develop art skills contribute to lively displays across the academy.
 - The Trust partner schools have given valuable support to the academy in working together to understand assessment information and to share understanding of high quality teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors recognised the difficulties of the past and have undertaken a governor review and a wide range of appropriate training to help them understand evidence about pupils' achievement from tests and teachers' assessments. They use this to plan appropriate development, funded by the academy's budget, and then monitor its effectiveness.
 - Governors make sure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, supports eligible pupils. They carefully check the effectiveness of this spending against the progress made.
 - Governors use the appraisal system to hold the teachers accountable for pupils' achievement. They use this information to make decisions about staff pay and career progression.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their positive attitudes and enjoyment of learning help them to make good progress. They play boisterously but happily on the playground and make good friends with others across a wide range of backgrounds.
- Pupils concentrate and work hard whether on their own or sharing learning with others. In a mathematics lesson in Year 3, for example, they worked in groups to plan and cost out a party, and they were able to support and challenge each other's thinking appropriately.
- Pupils generally build respectful and courteous relationships with all members of the academy community. The learning mentor and all staff support this work.
- During the inspection, there was no disruption of any kind in classes. Play time and dinner time were happy and lively experiences.
- Most pupils take great care with their work but the standards of presentation are not yet consistently good in all pupils' workbooks.
- Pupils have developed opportunities to support the reading progress of younger pupils in the academy within a lunch-time club. They invite others from the playground and sit with them, listening to them read and helping them when they struggle. They enjoy this responsibility which they have devised and they run the club very effectively and sensibly.
- Behaviour is good in the before- and after-school clubs, which are well managed.
- Pupils enjoy holding elections for team captains and representatives to the academy council, and those elected enjoy representing their classes and teams.
- Pupils appreciate the rewards for good work and behaviour and they enjoy attending the many sports clubs offered.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The academy site offers many exciting areas, and is secure and checked regularly. All necessary checks are carried out on visitors and before appointing new staff.
- Pupils talk about lessons and assemblies which help them to understand how to stay safe. A great deal of work is done by staff to help them to recognise the many dangers around them, particularly from the internet, mobile phones and social media. Most pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe, and there are well-developed programmes in the academy to support those pupils who have difficulties in this area.
- Pupils understand the many forms of bullying and say that, when rare instances occur, staff help them to deal with these effectively.
- All staff and governors are well trained to protect pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable, and pupils say that they feel safe because they know that staff will help them.
- Attendance is below the average nationally. Staff work well with outside agencies to support any pupils who raise concerns, and these are followed up urgently. There are many examples of success in addressing welfare concerns, and policies are followed rigorously to address those pupils who find attendance difficult.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils make good progress in all subjects because of the good teaching and high expectations of learning and behaviour in the academy. Teachers use the tracking systems available to identify any pupil who is at risk of underachieving.
- Teachers understand what pupils already know and they plan work which stretches pupils of all abilities, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. This does not always impact upon the work offered at all stages of the lesson. There are wide ability ranges in each class and, while pupils make good progress over time, there are often periods in lessons when the work is too focused at one level. This means that pupils at either extreme of the ability range lose some opportunities to make progress.
- The warm and caring relationships established by staff and the rewards given for hard work and achievement encourage pupils to concentrate and make good progress.
- Pupils who experience emotional or behavioural difficulties are well supported by a learning mentor who works with parents and accesses help from other agencies where appropriate.

- Phonics teaching (linking letters and sounds that they make) seen during the inspection was very effective in stretching pupils of all abilities. This is now contributing well to their progress in reading, spelling and writing.
- Teachers encourage pupils in all classes to use their reading skills to find out information about their topics, which combine learning from all aspects of the curriculum. Writing skills are developed by recounting history or exploring faith festivals, while mathematics skills use measurements or data analysis in science experiments. The many experiences and visits, such as the one to London, help pupils explore British values.
- Pupils are encouraged to 'self correct' their work as part of the learning process and there is evidence that this is making a good contribution to their progress. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly making it clear where they have been successful and how they can improve further. Pupils then respond to this by correcting their work.
- Staff welcome parents to work in the academy with their children so that they can understand today's curriculum and expectations. Parents who were approached during the inspection greatly appreciated these opportunities and the level of care and help given by all staff.
- Staff ask questions in lessons which help them to assess pupils' understanding, and to target further challenge or support.
- Teaching assistants have appropriate training and work with pupils of all abilities to extend their understanding of what is being taught.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children's skills as they enter the Nursery are below those typical for their age.
- In the phonics screening check in Year 1 in 2014, levels achieved by pupils were broadly in line with those seen nationally.
- In Year 2 in 2014, pupils achieved levels below average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, they had made good progress from their levels at the end of Reception.
- As pupils move through the academy, they develop good skills in reading. They use their reading to extend their understanding of the topics they study.
- In 2014, the achievement of pupils in Year 6 was above average in writing, but below average in reading, English punctuation and grammar, and mathematics. Their progress from the end of Year 2 was in line with expectations in writing, and below expectations in reading and mathematics. However, from their starting points on entry to the academy, they had made at least expected progress in all areas.
- A significant proportion of the disadvantaged pupils in this year group had complex needs. At the end of Year 6, they were four and a half terms behind their classmates and seven and a half terms behind others nationally in mathematics; two and a half terms behind their classmates and four terms behind others nationally in reading; three terms behind their classmates and one and a half terms behind others nationally in writing; and three terms behind their classmates and over five and a half terms behind others nationally in English punctuation and grammar.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs made expected progress from their starting points in reading and writing, but less progress in mathematics and English punctuation and grammar. In other year groups, they made good progress.
- The most able pupils in this year group made expected progress. These pupils in other year groups made good progress and this has improved during this year. They particularly enjoy the opportunity to work with pupils of similar abilities across the local partnership of schools in the Trust.
- Pupils of all abilities made good progress in the other year groups last year and this has continued to be the case for this year. There is not yet enough consistency across the year groups in making sure that all pupils are appropriately stretched.
- Pupils talk enthusiastically about the exciting topics, visits, and theme weeks which help them to develop their skills across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils learn about people from other cultures, faiths and backgrounds through visits to places of worship. These help them to develop respect and tolerance for those who are different from themselves in some way.

The early years provision**is good**

- Some of the children who join the Reception class did not attend the Nursery. Action taken by leaders since becoming an academy has transformed the department and is now leading to rapid progress. Work seen during the inspection suggests that children are now achieving standards much closer to those seen nationally than the starting point for older children in the academy.
- Staff have appropriate training so that they are able to understand children's achievement and plan exciting learning activities for children of all abilities.
- The learning environment in early years is vibrant and used to challenge and support children well. Children are kept safe and secure.
- Activities chosen by the children and those led by staff to develop skills in all areas of the curriculum are very creative and offer many opportunities for developing their basic skills.
- Rapid learning in phonics is applied to their reading and writing.
- Children enthusiastically and purposefully explore the indoor and outdoor environment which is organised well to support investigation, thinking and cooperation.
- Children are happy and confident as they come to the academy. Their parents spend time in class working alongside them so that they understand how children learn at this early stage.
- Children's good behaviour and attitudes help them to concentrate on their activities and to work well together or on their own.

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	139770
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	449979

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Rushton
Headteacher	Jane Hemery
Date of previous school inspection	Not inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01235 813304
Fax number	01235 512259
Email address	Office.3912@willowcroft.oxon.sch.uk

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