

Willow Tree

2 Greenland Street, Salford, M6 5JT

Inspection dates 24–25 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The school is well led. The high aspirations and clear vision of senior leaders and governors have been instrumental in bringing about improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement since the last inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is good. From their individual starting points, all groups of pupils, including the most able, make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years provision where they thrive and rapidly develop new skills and knowledge.
- Teaching is good. This is because teachers and support staff have good professional knowledge. They relate to, and care for, all pupils and their families exceptionally well.
- The school has worked well with parents to improve pupils' attendance; attendance is now broadly average and rising.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Adults' expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are high. This results in strong levels of trust and respect between the pupils themselves and towards adults.
- Pupils feel safe in this inclusive and harmonious school. They are usually eager to learn and are very proud of their school. Parents highly value the friendly environment in which their children learn.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. There is a strong sense of community throughout the school which pupils, parents and staff are proud of and happy to share.
- Teachers prepare pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain through a rich, diverse and vibrant curriculum. Music and sports specialists, as well as strong partnerships within the community, make a significant contribution to pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of the world.
- The school continues to improve because leaders share a very clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The work set is not always challenging enough to extend the capabilities of all pupils, including of the most able.
- Marking is not always detailed enough to guide pupils toward better standards. Pupils do not always have the opportunity to respond to their teachers' comments and learn how to improve their work further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and teaching in lessons and part lessons. Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- A scrutiny of pupils’ work over time in their books was carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, a consultant who works with the school, school staff and two members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils in lessons, during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors listened to a small number of pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at the latest school data on pupils’ achievement and the progress they are currently making.
- Other documentation scrutinised included strategic development planning, safeguarding information, behaviour logs, attendance records and minutes of recent meetings of the governing body.
- There were too few responses received at the time of the inspection from the online questionnaire (Parent View) to consider. The views of the parents that the inspectors spoke to and those expressed through the school’s own parental survey were taken into account.
- Inspectors took account of the 42 responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Clare Henderson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marilyn Massey

Additional Inspector

Craig Richardson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is above the national average. Currently, there are no disabled pupils.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average. The term disadvantaged pupils is used to describe those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. These pupils receive additional support through the pupil premium funding.
- The early years provision comprises two Nursery and two Reception classes. The children attend the provision full time.
- The majority of pupils are White British. A small, though increasing, proportion is from various minority ethnic groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There is a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body; this formed part of the inspection.
- The school is part of a local cluster of schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that standards of attainment and the rates of progress that all pupils make in their learning are outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that work set is challenging enough to extend the capabilities of all pupils, including the most able
 - making sure that marking consistently helps pupils to understand how to improve their work, and that pupils are given regular opportunities to respond to the teachers' comments.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher shows exceptional vision and ability to motivate staff and pupils to succeed in the 'Willow Tree Way'. These strengths, together with the deputy headteacher's determined and focused leadership, ensure that all staff are fully involved in school improvement work.
- Staff wholeheartedly support this vision and the words of one sums this up, 'I am proud of what we achieve in this community, we make a difference every day'. Senior leaders are supported by an effective team, including the governors, who are ambitious to raise standards further. This has resulted in an ethos in which good behaviour is the norm and pupils make good progress.
- Senior leaders know the school well and maintain a rigorous focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Recent and continuing improvements ensure that more pupils than in the past now make better than expected progress and reach higher levels of attainment.
- Leaders manage teachers' performance well. A highly effective system is in place that enables leaders to identify teachers' training needs and provide relevant training. The professional development of staff is given a high priority and is linked firmly to pupils' progress.
- The leadership and management of teaching are good. Senior staff check the quality of teaching thoroughly. English and mathematics subject leaders, who are members of the senior leadership team, are very effective. They pinpoint precisely where teaching needs to be improved because they check on the amount of learning taking place in lessons.
- Middle leaders are well organised and check standards in their subjects systematically. They offer class teachers well-judged advice and practical support to improve their teaching. As a result, most teaching succeeds in engaging pupils' interest and improving their skills and knowledge, although work set is sometimes insufficiently challenging. This is why leadership is not outstanding overall.
- Pupils say how much they enjoy doing their projects, such as 'Traders and Raiders', 'My Salford' and 'The First World War'. Such topics have successfully engaged the interest of pupils and successfully extended the writing skills of some reluctant writers.
- The school has a broad and diverse curriculum that meets most pupils' needs and prepares all pupils very well for life in modern Britain. Learning is enriched by a wide-ranging and interesting variety of approaches. For example, during the inspection, the school organised a Diversity Day in which pupils and staff took part in a range of workshops which considered issues such as racism, bullying, homophobia and homelessness.
- The school provides a range of exciting learning opportunities for pupils. For example, many pupils learn to play a musical instrument, sing in the choir, attend the highly popular breakfast club or belong to one of the many after-school clubs. This enriches their social experiences in school exceptionally well.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Assemblies are highly positive experiences that allow pupils the opportunity to reflect on the school's values and to consider wider issues like democracy and justice.
- A carefully thought-out programme ensures that, from the moment they enter the school, pupils develop a strong understanding of different beliefs and lifestyles from around the world. Themed topics are used effectively to complement this. For example, themed weeks on cultural diversity and prayer make pupils reflect and gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of the feelings and beliefs of others.
- The school supports disadvantaged pupils well through its careful use of the pupil premium funding. It promotes equality of opportunity very well and is successful in giving every child the chance to succeed and benefit from all aspects of school life. Variations in the rates of progress between different groups of pupils are being reduced quickly.
- Pupils state that there is no discrimination in the school. Parents also confirm that the school operates in a very friendly, caring and supportive environment.
- The primary sports funding is used well. It provides extensive opportunities for pupils to engage in competitive sport and to promote their physical development. Sports coaches work alongside teachers to develop pupils' skills, health and well-being. Pupils frequently participate in a range of activities, including sports enrichment weeks in which they try out new sports, such as trampolining and fencing.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding systems are very thorough and fully meet statutory requirements.
- The school receives appropriate support from the local authority, relevant to this good school. It benefits well from being part of a strong cluster of local schools and senior leaders have provided leadership support for other schools.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is well informed and governors know the school well. They actively contribute to the school's monitoring and evaluation programme. Governors make effective use of available data on pupils' achievement. Their robust questioning of senior leaders gives them valuable information about teaching quality and all aspects of the school's performance. Governors provide both support and challenge for senior leaders and ensure that they are held to account for pupils' progress. For example, they ensure that there is a clear link between the way in which teachers move along the pay scales and their impact on pupils' progress.
- Governors carefully check the use of the pupil premium funding and are aware of the highly positive impact that it has had upon learning for this group of eligible pupils. They are similarly diligent in ensuring that the additional sports funding is used well. Together with school leaders, governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff set high standards to which most pupils readily respond.
- Pupils show respect and friendliness to adults, visitors and their classmates. They have a good understanding of the school's behaviour policy. Pupils were observed helping others to resolve difficulties. This ensures a happy, welcoming and harmonious school, which makes a strong contribution to pupils' good achievement.
- Pupils' good attendance, behaviour, work and reading are regularly celebrated and pupils are encouraged to take pleasure in the success of others. Their attitudes to learning are good across the school. However, occasionally, a few pupils lose concentration when they are given a task that does not fully engage or challenge them.
- Attendance has improved because the school has worked hard with pupils and their families to help them understand how important it is to come to school regularly. Increasing pupils' attendance at the breakfast club has made a significant contribution toward pupils' broadly average attendance and better punctuality.
- Pupils with particular behavioural needs are helped to learn to manage their behaviour through a robust system of rewards and sanctions.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Procedures for identifying and reporting any safeguarding issues are thorough.
- The school, and particularly the highly effective learning mentors and inclusion leader, liaises exceptionally well with other agencies in order to provide the best possible support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, as well as for their families.
- Pupils know about keeping themselves safe. They are clear about what constitutes bullying and the various forms in which it can take place. They say that, on the rare occasions when bullying or racism occur in school, it is quickly dealt with when they report it to adults. These instances are rare because the focus on respecting the views of others is celebrated well through such activities as the Diversity Day.
- The views of all pupils are valued and nurtured, so that all feel special. Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given and the work of the school council in, for instance, seeking the views of their classmates as to which charities they should support, or when gathering articles to publish in the school newspaper.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. All parents who completed the school questionnaire or spoke to the inspectors stated that their children are happy, safe and well looked after at school.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is consistently good and has been over time. There are examples of outstanding teaching. Discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of the work in their books confirm that teaching is good.
- Teachers have good professional knowledge and skills, which enable them to spot and react quickly to any emerging misunderstandings by pupils.
- Good teaching helps pupils to consolidate and build on their starting points, which are often well below those that are typical for their age. It secures good progress and average standards by the end of Year 6 in reading, and below average standards in writing and mathematics. The good quality teaching helps

pupils to enjoy learning, which prepares them well for the next stage of their learning.

- Teachers use a wide range of strategies to improve pupils' progress. For example, the teaching of reading and writing is based on giving pupils a sound, basic grasp of phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they represent) and of the punctuation that they need to use to improve the quality of their writing.
- The teaching of reading throughout the school is a strength. Reading records show that younger pupils are heard to read every day, and often by highly committed parents and community volunteers.
- Older pupils read for pleasure during reading sessions guided by an adult or when reading together from a novel linked to their class project work. For instance, the novel *Holes* by Louis Sachar thoroughly engaged the pupils, and particularly the boys, while carrying out their project on Mexico. Such was their enthusiasm that one boy wanted to stay in at play time to carry on with this writing.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. The increased use of reasoning to solve mathematical problems, and the application of these skills, for example in carrying out science investigations, have advanced pupils' confidence and good achievement in the subject.
- Teachers and support assistants work very well together to ensure that pupils, including those who have special educational needs, have the support and challenge that they need to make good progress.
- From the early years onwards, children are taught skills in mathematics and phonics sessions. Pupils appreciate this support and report that they enjoy learning and that teachers make lessons fun. Parents say that their children are taught well.
- Inspectors' observations of teaching and the work in pupils' books show that most of the work undertaken by pupils generally matches their ability and moves their learning forward. Occasionally, teachers do not move pupils on to more challenging activities quickly enough. At such times, pupils sometimes do not always concentrate as hard as they could and the rate of learning slows.
- Teachers' marking shows pupils where they have been successful but does not consistently show them what they need to do next to improve their work. Sometimes, pupils are not always given time to act on the guidance they are given and do not make as much progress as they could.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well because of the overall good quality teaching throughout the school.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2014, pupils reached standards which were in line with the national average in reading and below average in writing and mathematics. From where they started their education, this represents good progress for these pupils.
- Standards are rising across the school. The proportion of pupils whose work shows that they are on track to attain Level 4 or Level 5 at the end of Year 6 has improved from 2014. This is because of the successful focus of school leaders on providing additional tuition as required, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- The school's results in the Year 1 phonics screening check were in line with the national average in 2014. Standards and children's early reading skills are improving, following effective training for staff in the teaching of phonics.
- The school is effective in the way in which it teaches the youngest pupils to read and in increasing the opportunities that all pupils have to apply their writing skills in their project work. As a result, standards in reading and writing are improving.
- The most-able pupils throughout the school do not consistently achieve as well as they could. This is because the work set, as evident in pupils' books, is not always challenging enough to engage pupils' interest and enable them to achieve the best they can.
- In 2014, the achievement of the disadvantaged pupils was below that of their non-disadvantaged classmates by one term in reading and mathematics and by two terms in writing. They were two terms behind other pupils nationally in mathematics, one term in reading and three terms in writing.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils throughout the school is good and compares very favourably with that of other pupils nationally. Gaps in achievement are closing well. The disadvantaged pupils currently in the school achieve as well as, and in some cases achieve better than, their classmates. This is because of the effective use of the additional funding to provide a high level of targeted support. This leads to highly positive attitudes to learning that have a direct impact on improving pupils' achievement.
- Those pupils who have special educational needs are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because of the effectively targeted support they receive. Early identification of their needs, together with increasingly effective support and guidance from teachers and support assistants, make sure that they achieve well.

- Pupils from different ethnic groups achieve equally well because the school is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and is highly successful at tackling discrimination.

The early years provision

is good

- The overall quality of the early years provision is good. Most children start in the Nursery classes with skills which are well below those typical for their age, particularly in their social and communication skills. Owing to good and sometimes outstanding teaching, the children make good progress from their various starting points.
- The high quality provision in the early years offers a welcoming, safe atmosphere. The learning areas are bright and highly stimulating, both inside and out. The children enjoy their exciting activities so that they make a good start to their school lives.
- Teachers and support assistants have a good understanding of how children learn. Activities allow all groups of children to make good progress although, occasionally, they do not provide enough challenge especially for the most able. At these times, children do not achieve as well as they could.
- Many activities are focused on a theme built around a story. For example, inspired by the story of *The Hungry Caterpillar*, Reception children were enthusiastically searching for the items the caterpillar had eaten. When they had found them, they used their well-established knowledge of letters and sounds very effectively to support the accurate spelling of the words.
- Reading is given high priority and children in the Reception classes read every day. As a result, they are confident to use their knowledge of letters and sounds to write stories.
- The children play well together; this was evidenced as a group played in the sand, discussing and measuring the proportion of different ingredients needed to make pancakes. Calculation and counting skills were used effectively to carry out this investigation.
- Another group of children were totally enthralled as they used small hammers to crack open their fossil eggs and discover dinosaurs. At such times, children's creative, exploratory and communication skills are extended very effectively.
- Children are safe and happy. All welfare and safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented consistently. The children take turns to play with different equipment, their behaviour is good and they follow routines well. Those children who have special educational needs and disadvantaged children are included fully. They are well supported in their learning.
- Good relationships are built up between parents and staff. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved with their children's learning through opportunities to, for instance, 'stay and play'.
- The early years leader provides outstanding leadership. She has a clear vision of what is needed to improve learning further. Strong teamwork is evident and all adults work well together. Staff are good role models and continuously ask the children questions to improve their learning.
- The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development, which is the expected standard at the end of the Reception Year, is improving over time. In 2014, the proportion was close to the national average and similar outcomes are anticipated for the current Reception class. Consequently, children leave the Reception Year well prepared for learning in Year 1.

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	136079
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	461926

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	481
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wayne Whitling
Headteacher	Ros Munro
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2011
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