

Willow Academy

Alston Road, Bessacarr, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN4 7EZ

Inspection dates

17–18 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The overall effectiveness of the school has declined since the last inspection because of weak leadership over time.
- Support and training to overcome weaknesses in teaching and leadership have been ineffective. Consequently, both are inadequate.
- Pupils' outcomes across key stages 1 and 2 are inadequate. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics is highly inconsistent across year groups and between classes and subjects.
- Teachers' expectations are too low. As a result, the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities underachieve, as do others.
- Pupils do not always listen well or persist with their work in lessons. There is a small amount of low-level disruption in classes. At lunchtimes, the behaviour of a minority of pupils is not considerate to the welfare of others.
- Senior leaders and middle leaders have not been diligent in checking the quality of teaching and the work of pupils over time.
- The curriculum fails to meet the needs of pupils or prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not progressing well.
- Middle and senior leaders have not tackled poor skills in reading, writing and mathematics effectively. Across a wide range of subjects, pupils' progress is inadequate.
- In the early years, leadership has not ensured that teaching challenges children well enough. As a result, most do not exceed expectations.
- Governors and sponsors have not held leaders to account for their actions. Hence, ineffective progress has been made in tackling previous weaknesses. Governors have not ensured that they fulfil their statutory duties effectively.
- The school's capacity for improvement is too dependent on the external support of the trust. Many leaders are very new to their posts and have not had time to overcome the inadequacies inherent in the school.

The school has the following strengths

- In early years, children's personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. This helps children to be prepared for learning in Year 1.
- New leaders have a clear understanding of the significant challenges facing the school. The trust has recently strengthened the level of support to the school to help improvement.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good and enables all groups of pupils, including the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to achieve well by ensuring that:
 - staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - assessment information is used skilfully to plan challenging work for pupils
 - teachers guide pupils appropriately to take on challenging tasks that match their needs and abilities
 - explanations of what pupils are to do and learn are concise and clear so that pupils know precisely what is expected of them
 - skilful questioning engages pupils well and deepens their understanding of what is being learned
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills and write at length across a wide range of subjects
 - checking regularly pupils' understanding of what they are reading to strengthen comprehension.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - adults manage pupils' behaviour consistently well to promote good attitudes to learning
 - pupils behave considerately to others, particularly when playing at breaktimes and lunchtimes
 - records of behaviour and accidents are analysed accurately and leaders take effective actions to minimise incidents.
- Improve the provision in early years by:
 - securing substantive leadership to ensure consistently good teaching
 - ensuring that challenging work is set and leads to most children making better than expected progress.
- Rapidly improve the impact of leadership at all levels, including governance, by making sure that:
 - senior leaders and middle leaders check the quality of teaching thoroughly and link it closely to the progress pupils are making to ensure that both are good

- the trust arranges high-quality training and support to ensure that teaching and leadership rapidly improve to be good
- the curriculum is well taught across a wide range of subjects and includes good opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of other cultures
- pupils have a good understanding of fundamental British values so that they know what is required to be a good citizen
- teachers are sufficiently skilled to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs identified and met and make good progress
- subject leaders are skilled in checking learning and supporting teaching and have sufficient time to ensure that both are good across a wide range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics
- governors ensure good, substantive leadership in all areas
- governors ensure that pupils have more consistency in teaching staff across the school to accelerate their progress
- governors hold leaders to account for their actions, including the effective use of additional government funding
- governors fulfil all of their statutory duties to ensure that the overall effectiveness of the school is at least good.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Over time, senior leaders and governors have not been effective in addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. They have been unsuccessful in tackling poor teaching and pupils' underachievement.
- Senior leaders have failed to check the quality of teaching effectively. They have not provided appropriate support and training for staff to enable them to teach well.
- Middle leaders have not had sufficient skills, or time, to check the quality of teaching in their subjects and this has led to underachievement across a wide range of subjects.
- The checking of progress made by different groups of pupils has been ineffective, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have not given effective support to these pupils, across the school, and there is much to be done to ensure equality of opportunity for all.
- The curriculum and poor teaching have failed to ensure that pupils make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects. There is little emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects. Subjects are taught in isolation with little emphasis on the application of these skills. The curriculum does not support strong learning or pupils' understanding of British values. There are visits to places of interest in the locality to support pupils' learning. A popular drama club is well attended after school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is not promoted well throughout the curriculum. Religious education lessons promote spiritual opportunities, but pupils' work shows that it requires further improvement. Social and moral education is promoted effectively; pupils' cultural understanding is a weaker element.
- Additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils has not been used effectively to strengthen pupils' progress. Leaders' skills in measuring the impact of the pupil premium for disadvantaged pupils are underdeveloped. Money for pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities has not been spent effectively. As a result, this group of pupils underachieve.
- The physical education and sports funding has not ensured good-quality teaching of physical education. Leaders have not ensured that pupils have access to a wide range of competitive sport, and pupils' engagement is not high enough. Pupils enjoy early-morning multi-sport activities.
- Leaders ensure that incidents of misbehaviour and the causes of accidents are recorded meticulously. However, there is no clear analysis to identify patterns to consider how to minimise risks and to strengthen positive behaviours. New leaders have plans to remedy this but they are not in place.
- Performance management for teachers has not been thorough, with some staff indicating that they have not had annual performance management reviews to support their work. This has limited leaders' capacity to overcome weaknesses in teaching and middle leadership. Currently, interim leadership has made sure that all teachers have completed the initial stages of performance management and targets have been set.

New plans to improve the school's identified weaknesses found by inspectors are linked well to teachers' performance targets.

- Over time, the work of the trust has not been effective in supporting the school. Leaders of the trust have not checked the progress of the school well enough. They have not made sure that agreed actions have been put in place by leaders in the school and, as a result, the overall effectiveness of the school has declined. Very recently, the trust has taken a more robust approach to checking the work of the school and has put in place a high level of support to remedy weaknesses. There are early signs of improvement.
- The recently appointed interim senior leaders have, in a short period of time, started to identify weaknesses and prioritise the steps needed to rectify these. During the inspection, senior leaders and inspectors were often in agreement regarding the quality of teaching and the progress being made by pupils. The interim senior leaders are clear about the significant challenges that face the school. Middle leaders are keen to start their work and are highly supportive of the new senior leaders.
- Parents told inspectors that they had seen some improvements in the school in a relatively short period of time. However, they also said that much is still to be done to strengthen communication with them. Those responding to Parent View indicated very little confidence in leadership over time and a clear majority would not recommend the school.
- Newly qualified teachers are supported appropriately and have access to training from the trust and the local authority for the early stages of their career development. Inspectors recommend that the school should not seek to appoint more newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Governance is inadequate. Very recently, the trust has replaced the previous local governing body with an interim executive committee. This group, which includes some members of the previous governing body in a 'shadow' capacity, has yet to meet.
- Governors have not ensured that they fulfil their statutory duties. They have not provided robust and effective challenge to leaders regarding the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. As a result, both are inadequate. Despite governors' lack of monitoring arrangements, safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- Governors have not ensured that a review of pupil premium funding, recommended at the previous inspection, has taken place. They have not ensured that the use of this additional funding is effective. Nor have they ensured that the sports grant funding has been used effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate systems and procedures are in place to protect children and keep them safe. Information regarding vulnerable pupils is kept securely and appropriate agencies are contacted, when necessary. Parents are informed about the safety of their children and are involved in appropriate meetings to ensure that their children are protected.

- The school fulfils all the requirements for checking staff's suitability to work with children. The school provides effective training to ensure that staff are aware of how they should act to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Across key stages 1 and 2, the overall quality of teaching is weak. Since the previous inspection, leadership has not provided sufficient support for and challenge to the quality of teaching to be effective. Pupils have had considerable interruption to their learning through the use of too many short-term teachers or supply teachers. Parents are understandably concerned that variability of teaching is hindering their children's progress.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are too low. They are not using information about pupils' previous learning to plan effectively and help pupils make good progress. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not given effective support to learn well.
- Work set does not match the needs and abilities of pupils. Often, work is too easy and not challenging enough to help pupils make good progress. Teachers allow pupils to choose their own level of challenge for work but give too little advice. Generally, pupils choose work that is not challenging enough and this leads to progress being too slow.
- Teachers' explanations are not sufficiently clear, leaving pupils unsure about what they need to do. This slows pupils' progress considerably. Questioning skills are generally underdeveloped. Pupils are not engaged effectively through questioning and their understanding is not assessed carefully. As a result, some pupils lose concentration and do not contribute to their learning. When this happens, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are not always effectively checked and modified by teachers.
- There are very few opportunities for pupils to write at length or apply their mathematical skills in a range of subjects. Consequently, pupils are not deepening their subject knowledge across a range of subjects. Reading skills are not checked regularly across a range of subjects. Groups of pupils do not understand what they are reading and their work slows considerably. Errors in pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation are not picked up swiftly enough to strengthen their writing skills.
- Teaching assistants make positive efforts to support pupils' learning. Generally, they are well respected by pupils. However, their work is not well managed by teachers to ensure that pupils make consistently effective progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils have not developed consistently good attitudes to learning. They do not listen well enough to what their teachers are telling them. They do not always persist well with their work and are too dependent on the support of adults.

- Pupils are not consistently taking enough pride in their work and this hampers their progress. There are good examples of neat presentation and detailed work that support good progress. However, there is variation in the quality of presentation across and within classes.
- At lunchtime and breaktime there are a small proportion of pupils who are not considerate of others when playing. Unstructured play leads to pupils rushing around and there are times when this causes accidents that could be avoided. Leaders plan to promote more structured play and good supervision but these have not been put in place.
- Pupils are often pleasant, polite and courteous, exhibiting good manners and respect. However, now and again, a small number of pupils do not treat other pupils and adults with respect. Pupils' understanding of British values is underdeveloped as these are not taught well across subjects.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to accept posts of responsibility. For example, they are proud to be members of the school council and know they have good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. During the inspection, the school council organised activities to collect for a children's charity. Pupils enjoyed the events and gave generously.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. Visits from the fire department and police services help pupils understand how to keep safe.
- Pupils say that they are safe in school and parents indicated that they believe their children are safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- When pupils are not interested in work, some lose concentration and do not make a good contribution to their learning. Inspectors noted that a few pupils can be too chatty and do not respond well to adults' requests. Occasionally, this leads to the learning of other pupils being interrupted.
- Around school, the majority of pupils behave well throughout the day. However, the behaviour of a small proportion of pupils is not consistently good. Half of the parents responding to the online questionnaire believed that behaviour is not good.
- Pupils say that, although bullying occurs, they are confident that it is dealt with appropriately. A significant minority of parents responding to the online questionnaire felt that the school did not deal with bullying effectively.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school. Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual to school. The interim headteacher and the trust have effective plans to use computer systems to record and analyse misbehaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Weak teaching and leadership over time have led to pupils making inadequate progress.

- An analysis of the work of current pupils across key stages 1 and 2 shows that there are a significant proportion of pupils who are underachieving because of poor teaching over time. Overall, pupils' progress in reading, mathematics and writing is weak.
- Across a wide range of subjects, including science, pupils are not making effective gains in knowledge, skills and understanding because of teachers' low expectations. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not checked appropriately across subjects and this leads to poor development of these skills.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not challenged well enough by the work set for them and their current progress is highly variable and inadequate.
- Over time, leadership identified very few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, new leaders have identified more pupils in need of support and are beginning to address their needs. Indications are that, over time, the needs of this group of pupils have not been met and their progress, along with that of others, is weak.
- Disadvantaged pupils make highly variable progress because their needs have not been clearly identified. Across the school, their progress is very inconsistent. Their progress has been no better than expected in key stage 2 because of variability across subjects. Attainment in key stage 1 is below that of others nationally as pupils make too little progress.
- Over time, reading has not been promoted well by the school and pupils are making slow progress. Teachers are not supporting the development of reading effectively. There is too little checking of pupils' understanding of what is being read, and the assessment of reading skills is not systematic which hampers pupils' learning. However, pupils say that they read regularly at home and they enjoy reading. The school is promoting parental support for reading at the start of the school day.
- Over time, there has been significant variability in attainment in the phonics screening check. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in 2015 was well below average, but in 2016 it was above average.
- Inspectors checked pupils' reading skills throughout the inspection and found that insufficient progress is being made.
- There are pockets of effective progress in individual classes and across subjects.
- Current leadership is aware of the highly inconsistent progress across the school and, with the support of the trust, has plans to tackle it.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Over time, leadership has not ensured consistently good teaching across the provision. As a result, more needs to be done to ensure that most children make better than typical progress from their starting points to exceed the early learning goals.
- The interim leader has effective plans to strengthen the provision. However, she has a limited amount of time in the school to make sure that the plans are put in place highly effectively. Currently, the school has not taken steps to ensure that there is full-time substantive leadership for the provision to strengthen the capacity for further improvement.

- Children are keen and settle well to their learning. They cooperate well with adults and work well together. They enjoy the exciting opportunities that adults plan for them. Children's behaviour is positive as is their personal development and welfare.
- Overall, adults support children's learning effectively. Now and again, the most able children are not challenged to do even better than they should and occasionally tasks are too easy for them. There are too few disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make meaningful comparisons between their progress and that of others.
- Children enter the provision with skills that are typical for their age. By the end of Reception, the proportion attaining a good level of development is above average. There are children who exceed expectations in their development, but more are capable of doing so with greater challenge.
- The interim leader has ensured that the curriculum provides good opportunities for children to engage in reading, writing and mathematics. There are good opportunities for children to develop a wide range of appropriate skills both indoors and outdoors. The curriculum supports children's good personal development, welfare and behaviour.
- Records of children's learning are well kept although, at times, next steps to improve learning are not clear and the leader knows that this is an area to be strengthened. Parents make a good contribution to children's learning by keeping records of what their children are doing at home as well as supporting reading sessions in the provision. Parents are positive about the work that is being done with their children.
- Children are well looked after, safeguarding is effective and all the appropriate welfare requirements are in place for early years.
- Children are appropriately prepared to start their learning in Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	138077
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10019754

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	385
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Robert Allsopp
Headteacher	Yvonne Buckley
Telephone number	01302 539249
Website	www.willowacademy.org/
Email address	admin@willow.doncaster.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 December 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the curriculum, the pupil premium funding, the sports premium, governors' register of interests, the most recent Ofsted report and the school's most recent key stage 2 results.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is below average.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who do not speak English as their first language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.

- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- In the early years, children receive full-time education in Reception.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school holds the Achievement for All award.
- Currently, an interim headteacher, appointed from 9 November 2016, is leading the school. A head of school was appointed to the leadership team from 24 October 2016.
- There have been significant changes in staffing and leadership since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of teaching and learning in parts of lessons, with four sessions jointly observed with a senior leader.
- Throughout the two days of the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils, both individually and in groups, about learning and safety.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading. They reviewed pupils' work in lessons and analysed samples of work in pupils' books.
- An inspector held a meeting with members of the interim executive committee. An inspector held a meeting with representatives of the Wakefield City Academies Trust.
- Inspectors also held meetings with senior leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors looked at the school's review of its own performance, its development and improvement plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of governing body meetings. They considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors analysed 50 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View).
- There were 10 staff questionnaires considered by inspectors.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start and end of the school day as well as during early morning reading sessions supported by parents.

Inspection team

Jim McGrath, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Marianne Young	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Shipman	Ofsted Inspector

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