

Willowdown Primary Academy

Kings Drive, Bridgwater TA6 4FU

Inspection dates

19–20 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders are bringing about improvement but their actions have not yet resulted in pupils' outcomes that are consistently good.
- Leaders' checks on teaching and learning have not had sufficient impact. So, too few pupils make the rates of progress that are expected, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching does not consistently build on what pupils already know. Sometimes work is too easy or pupils are moved through topics before they have secured understanding. This slows the progress that pupils make.
- As a result of inconsistent teaching, pupils have gaps in their learning. Leaders are tackling this, but it has narrowed the curriculum on offer.
- Disadvantaged pupils make inconsistent progress. Their attendance is not high enough.
- There is insufficient coverage of some curriculum subjects. Pupils do not apply English and mathematics skills consistently across the curriculum.
- Teaching does not provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. This hinders these pupils' progress.
- Trust staff have not had sufficient impact in holding the school to account for ensuring good teaching and pupils' outcomes. Recent improvement is evident but it is not yet sustained or making the difference it needs to across the school.
- Governors' persistence in challenging leaders has kept the school on track and enabled some school improvement. However, the impact of school leaders is not sufficient to bring about the required improvement across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher sets an ambitious vision for the school, rooted in an aspiration for high expectations. His work in rebuilding the school culture after considerable changes in leadership and teaching is notable.
- The early years provision is good. Effective teaching and nurturing support by staff ensures that children make good progress.
- Pupils with the most complex needs and/or vulnerabilities receive effective support. As a result, their learning needs are met.
- The vast majority of parents feel strongly that their children are happy and well cared for. Most pupils are keen to learn and do their best.
- Pupils who arrive mid-year are supported well and so settle into school life quickly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring the multi-academy trust continues to drive school improvement with rigour and holds leaders to account for enabling rapid progress and consistently good outcomes
 - ensuring leaders firmly hold teachers to account through their checks on teaching and pupils' progress
 - insisting that teachers' assessment is used precisely to plan work that is closely matched to pupils' needs
 - insisting that the expectations of teaching staff are consistently high and result in pupils' progress that is consistently good in relation to their prior attainment
 - insisting that the curriculum is broad.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - the teaching of reading and mathematics stretches and challenges middle-attaining pupils and the most able so that they make good progress
 - regular assessment is used by teachers to plan work to match the needs of pupils closely and build on what they already know
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve and their teaching eradicates the legacy of underachievement, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
 - ensuring that rates of attendance improve for all groups of pupils so that they are above the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has led determinedly through a period of significant challenge and turmoil, during considerable staff change and rapid school expansion. As a result, he has been successful in creating an inclusive and purposeful community where pupils are valued and enjoy coming to school.
- However, leaders do not hold staff to account stringently enough. Leaders' current actions are not bringing about teaching or pupils' outcomes that are good, particularly in key stage 2. As a result, leadership and management require improvement overall.
- Leaders' checks on teaching and learning do not have sufficient impact. Leaders do not follow up on weaknesses in performance robustly enough. Their checks are not appropriately focused on improving pupils' outcomes from their different starting points. As a result, middle-attaining pupils and the most able pupils do not make enough progress and too few pupils reach or exceed the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Leaders go the extra mile to ensure that pupils presenting challenging behaviour receive extra support and that inclusivity in the school is maintained. However, there have been occasions when the school's coordinated response to meet these pupils' needs has not been consistent with school policy. As a result, some aspects of record-keeping have not been compliant in the past.
- Middle leaders do not have enough impact on pupils' outcomes. However, their roles and responsibilities are beginning to develop as a result of recent training. Leaders carry out the actions identified on their subject action plans and work successfully with staff to improve their subject knowledge. Consequently, recent improvement is evident. For example, the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils is providing them with greater direction towards improvement of their work. Leaders are beginning to gain confidence and experience to challenge less effective practice. However, this work is recent and therefore its impact on improving teaching and raising pupils' outcomes is too limited.
- The special needs coordinator is passionate about improving provision for this group of pupils. Leaders use additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs/and or disabilities increasingly effectively. Provision for pupils with multi-complex needs is managed well. Multi-agency support is used effectively to assess and provide teachers with support to meet these pupils' needs. For some other pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, provision is more variable. Targeted intervention work is in place. However, work on offer does not consistently meet these pupils' needs well enough and, consequently, pupils make inconsistent progress.
- Leaders have not checked that the quality of the wider curriculum is good. The curriculum does not show sufficient coverage, for example in design and technology and geography. Insufficient levels of challenge in some year groups and subjects mean that pupils' progress wanes.
- Leaders' recent work to increase levels of challenge and ensure that work on offer meets pupils' needs is not yet fully effective. Some improvement is evident. For example, teachers now provide a tiered approach to challenge within planned activities

in core subjects. However, these activities are not consistently matched to pupils' needs. Too often pupils are not exposed to work at the higher standards. As a result, this hinders the progress of middle-attaining and the most able pupils, particularly at key stage 2.

- School-to-school support, facilitated by the executive headteacher, enables regular moderation of pupils' workbooks and additional staff training. Staff value the training and support they now receive. As a result, teachers' assessment is increasingly accurate and teachers' subject knowledge is improving. However, this training and support for teachers is not yet bringing about teaching that is consistently good.
- Leaders have not ensured that British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are promoted effectively. Not enough is done to incorporate these aspects into the curriculum. As a result, pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain is underdeveloped.
- Recent changes in the way the impact of pupil premium funding is analysed mean that this additional funding is managed increasingly well. The additional intervention in place to support pupils in Year 6 is making a positive difference. However, this is not yet resulting in pupils' outcomes that are consistently good or preparing these pupils fully for secondary school.
- Leaders use the sport premium effectively and pupils benefit from expert coaching. As a result, there is better engagement in sport within school. However, pupils spoken to on inspection would like more opportunities to play competitive team sports against other schools.
- Most parents spoken to during the inspection had positive views of the school. Of the parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, 85% would recommend the school. A small minority of parents expressed concerns relating to communication, pupils' behaviour and the progress their children make.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' transition into school for those pupils who arrive mid-year is sensitively managed. As a result, pupils generally settle quickly.

Governance of the school

- The local governing board has not been successful in ensuring that leaders have sufficient impact on ensuring that teaching and pupils' outcomes are good. However, governors have confronted leaders robustly about pupils' low rates of achievement. Governors are enthusiastic about the school's improvement work designed to strengthen pupils' outcomes. In this respect, they have focused additional teaching resources and pupil premium funding on ensuring that pupils' underachievement at key stage 2 is tackled effectively.
- In the past, the trust directors have not held the school to account robustly enough for low standards and have been too accepting of information provided. Since September 2016 the trust directors have been driving improvement more swiftly. This is having an impact this year and is helping to turn the school's weaknesses around. However, it is too early for the extent of the impact to be fully determined.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Those responsible for leading safeguarding work closely with external agencies to minimise children’s risk from harm. Current school documentation confirms that concerns are followed up quickly and appropriate records kept. The designated safeguarding leader (DSL) follows up any actions taken to ensure everything is being done to support children at risk.
- Staff training is up to date. All staff spoken to during the inspection knew exactly what to do if they were concerned. They talked with precision about the school systems in place, how to refer, and their responsibility to follow up any concerns they have raised with the DSL to assure themselves that swift and appropriate action has been taken.
- In response to an academy safeguarding audit, the single central record, staff vetting procedures and staff training have been updated. The safeguarding governor has also kept a close eye on matters to ensure that all actions are carried out. However, a small number of outstanding actions remain. These include, for example, updating the school’s procedures for restraint of pupils.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and adults respond appropriately to any concerns they have.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are too variable to be good. Teachers’ expectations are not consistently high. Inconsistent teaching results in some pupils underachieving. Teaching does not provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. Teachers’ questioning does not probe or deepen pupils’ understanding sufficiently. This hinders these pupils’ progress. The most able pupils do not get sufficient exposure to challenging work. As a result, too few pupils exceed expected standards.
- Teachers do not consistently use their knowledge of what pupils can and cannot do to plan work that is matched to pupils’ needs. Sometimes pupils are moved through topics without sufficient consolidation and practice. As a result, pupils do not secure a proficient understanding of the concepts taught and this impacts on the progress they make.
- Teachers’ checks on learning do not shape tasks or deal with misconceptions quickly enough. Sometimes pupils tackle work that is not at the right level. Consequently, pupils cannot sustain concentration on the tasks set and some off-task behaviour is evident. Sometimes pupils sit quietly but do not apply themselves well to the tasks in hand and this goes unnoticed by teachers. Consequently, the value of learning time is not maximised and pupils’ progress falters.
- Pupils have gaps in their learning as a result of inconsistent teaching or their previous educational experience. Teachers concentrate on tackling these remaining gaps in learning, but this has narrowed the curriculum on offer. Teaching does not allow pupils to apply their basic skills across the curriculum.
- The teaching of writing is too variable. Most recently, high-quality texts have been used as models to develop writing. However, too many writing activities are very structured and do not allow pupils to apply their writing skills with flair and

imagination. Some pupils' vocabulary is not well developed and this impacts on the cohesiveness of the text they write. As a result, too few pupils achieve the expected standards in writing.

- The impact of teaching on learning in mathematics is too variable. In some classes, pupils receive tasks that are appropriately challenging one day and too easy the next. In some instances, pupils are moved through tasks too quickly and, therefore, insufficient opportunity is in place for pupils to consolidate their learning before they move on.
- The teaching of phonics enables pupils to decode and read words successfully. However, pupils do not use their good understanding of phonics when they are writing, particularly in lower key stage 2. Weak spelling is not routinely picked up in some classes and this acts as a barrier against pupils writing fluently and at length and reaching expected standards.
- Teachers are using the training they have had to improve the quality of feedback pupils receive. However, inconsistencies remain. Not all teachers insist that pupils respond to their feedback and this slows pupils' progress. In other cases, effective feedback from teachers is invariably acted on and pupils' progress is swift.
- Recent improvements in the way that reading is taught are beginning to pay dividends. As a result, pupils' understanding of what they read is developing well. However, some pupils need to catch up so that they can infer meaning and draw conclusions about what they read, particularly in Years 3, 4 and 6.
- Teaching assistants provide a range of effective support. However, there are occasions when teachers do not have full oversight of pupils' learning and, because of this, they do not plan activities to ensure pupils make consistently good 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. The school does not yet provide a good enough curriculum and necessary support for pupils to become determined and effective learners. Some pupils find it difficult to maintain stamina and concentration and so their learning falters.
- Pupils report that they feel safe when they are at school. Pupils report that adults, including lunchtime staff, sort out any problems as they arise.
- There are a range of activities on offer for pupils at lunchtime and breaktimes. Adults engage and support in pupils' play. However, some pupils report that playtimes can be too rough. Inspection evidence supports this. Some name-calling is also evident. Staff manage these incidents well and use the school's systems and procedures for recording incidents. However, the consistency of monitoring of these records is not as tight as it could be.
- Pupils understand bullying and the different forms it can take. They say that when bullying occurs, leaders follow this up quickly and they have confidence that the school will 'sort it out quickly'.

- The breakfast club provides a safe and positive start to the day. This enables pupils to be ready to learn and settle to their day quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Some pupils are compliant. They work through tasks provided but do not apply themselves effectively. Overall, pupils meet the expectations set for them but, too often, work is not demanding enough and teachers do not notice quickly when pupils go off-task. Therefore, this slows the progress that pupils make.
- Conversely, there are very many pupils who demonstrate excellent manners, show resilience and consistently give learning time their all.
- Pupils' attendance is improving but it is not yet good. Leaders are taking robust action to minimise absence. Consequently, attendance is improving steadily. Pupils who do not attend regularly enough are well supported when they return to school to catch up.
- Rates of fixed-term exclusion have been above the national average and continue to be so. The school works closely with The Bridge Education Centre in Bridgwater and other external agencies effectively to ensure that pupils get the support they need and their individual needs are met.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Recently, leaders have implemented a proficient assessment system to measure pupils' progress and staff have been trained in its use. Teachers' assessments and pupils' outcomes are moderated within Collaborative Academies Trust (CAT) and across the school.
- No published data is available at the end of key stage 2. This is because the school opened in September 2014 and this is the first year of Year 6 pupils in the school.
- High rates of pupils arriving mid-year mean that a considerable proportion of pupils in key stage 2 have not been in the school for a sustained period. Consequently, pupils' current attainment in key stage 2 is not fully attributed to the quality of provision at the school. However, analysis of current work books confirms that some of these pupils fail to catch up quickly enough as a result of inconsistent teaching that is not closely matched to pupils' needs.
- In 2016, outcomes in reading at the end of key stage 1 were in line with national averages, marking a considerable improvement on the previous year. However, outcomes at the end of key stage 1 have been well below the national average in mathematics and writing for the last 2 years. Pupils now in Years 3 and 4 with middle and low prior attainment are not catching up quickly enough. The attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant and that of boys is too low in reading, writing, mathematics and spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- The most vulnerable pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who are looked after, make good progress as a result of close tracking to ensure pupils attend regularly and stay on track with their work.
- Work in books indicates that the most able pupils across the school could be

challenged even more. Inconsistent teaching means that these pupils are not exposed to sufficiently challenging work and this hinders the progress that they make in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Since the school opened, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening test has been in line with or above the national average. However, pupils' ability to apply their phonics knowledge to their writing is too variable.
- The proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development, the standard expected at the end of the early years, is increasing steadily and is now in line with the national average. Current children in Nursery and Reception make consistently good progress from their varied starting points.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is good. Leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the setting. They track children's progress regularly and know individuals well. As a result, children get off to a good start in the early years and make good progress overall.
- Parents speak very positively about how well their children settle because of the nurturing support received in Nursery and Reception. They appreciate the high expectations that the staff have and the way in which they foster children's independence to learn.
- Staff and children form positive relationships quickly. As a result, routines are well established and understood, children behave well and enjoy school.
- Additional funding through the pupil premium is used effectively. Small-group intervention work is making a positive difference and accelerating children's outcomes.
- Outcomes have risen since the school has opened and the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development, the standard expected at the end of early years, is increasing steadily and is now in line with the national average.
- Teaching in Reception is good. The breadth of curriculum is appropriate. Children enjoy the activities on offer and many show high levels of independence. For example, children were engrossed in making a beanstalk for Jack outside, sustaining concentration and communicating well.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Consequently, a very large proportion of children are developing in their early reading and writing proficiently. The most able children often make swift progress. As a result, these children can apply their knowledge of early phonics to their sentence writing and write with good stamina and accuracy. However, for some children with skills and knowledge lower than their age, their phonics skills remain underdeveloped because teaching does not consistently match their needs. This limits the progress they make.
- Nursery staff have high expectations for children and teaching is strong. Provision is adapted well to meet children's needs. Staff make timely assessments of what children can and cannot do. Consequently, they use their questioning skilfully to foster effective learning and so children make good, and sometimes rapid, progress.
- The statutory welfare arrangements required for early years settings are in place. Staff

are suitably trained and the site is secure.

- For a small proportion of children, language skills are not well developed. Leaders are determined to ensure that the provision on offer builds consistently on children's prior understanding so that remaining weaknesses in speech and language development are tackled quickly. However, leaders accurately identify that there is more to do.

School details

Unique reference number	140220
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10033101

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The academy trust board
Chair	Simon Peck
Headteacher	Oliver Priestley
Telephone number	01278 558758
Website	http://www.willowdownprimary.co.uk/
Email address	info@willowdownprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Willowdown Primary Academy opened in September 2014. It is an average-sized primary school and is part of the Collaborative Academies Trust (CAT), a growing multi-academy trust for primary, secondary and special schools. The work of the trust is overseen by a board of directors with each individual school having its own local governing body.
- The headteacher has been in post since May 2016. There are two assistant headteachers. Some middle leaders are recently appointed.
- There has been considerable staff change since the school opened.
- There is an executive headteacher who works strategically across the five CAT schools in Somerset. She has been working with this school since February 2016, when she undertook the interim headship. She now provides regular advice and coordinates school-to-school support.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its

website.

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- There is a breakfast club and after-school club which are managed by the school.
- Children in Reception attend full-time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning across the school. Some learning was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books to establish the quality of their current work and their progress over time. They listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents to ascertain the school's evaluation of its performance. Records relating to behaviour and safety, attendance and safeguarding were also reviewed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, assistant headteachers and middle leaders. Meetings also took place with a representative of the trust and with three governors.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during their learning and at lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with some pupils to seek their views of the school and discuss how they feel about their learning and development.
- An inspector visited the school's before- and after-school provision.
- Inspectors considered 20 responses to the online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also considered comments provided in parents' text messages and spoke to parents during the inspection. An inspector considered staff and pupils' views during the inspection and previewed the electronic surveys.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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