

# Willowbrook School

Summer Lane, Beacon Heath, Exeter, Devon EX4 8NN

## Inspection dates

11–12 July 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, a turbulence in staffing and leadership has led to a significant decline in pupils' outcomes.
- Across the school, current pupils are making stronger progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in many cases this has not yet addressed previous underachievement. Consequently, pupils' outcomes remain too low when compared to their starting points.
- Leaders' planning for the spending of pupil premium funding lacks precision. The criteria for measuring the success of actions do not enable leaders and governors to evaluate the impact initiatives are having on the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school has been too slow to adapt to changes in the national curriculum and its raised expectations. For example, the school has not yet put in place a mastery curriculum for the teaching of mathematics.
- Teachers do not provide the levels of challenge required to stretch pupils and deepen their understanding. This is limiting the proportions of pupils working at the higher standards, especially in mathematics. Some teachers have gaps in their subject knowledge. At times, this leads to a lack of precision in their use of mathematical language.
- Governors have not responded to a decline in standards with sufficient urgency. They do not have a secure understanding of the school's strengths or the impact that leaders' actions are having on the quality of teaching and, consequently, pupils' outcomes. They are not holding leaders to account with the required level of rigour.
- Safeguarding is effective and pupils feel safe in school. However, leaders' checks to ensure the ongoing safety of pupils require a greater degree of thoroughness. Some governors are too complacent with regard to safeguarding.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders demonstrate a determination to improve the school. They have a secure understanding of what needs to be done and are holding staff to account. Consequently, the school has improved rapidly this academic year.
- Children make strong progress in the early years. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- The school's 'Learning Hub' is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviours and attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful of adults and each other. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise outcomes of all groups of pupils so that the progress they make is at least comparable with that of other pupils nationally with the same starting points.
- Continue to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that teachers have a secure understanding of the requirements of the national curriculum, especially with regards to mastery
  - increasing levels of challenge for middle prior-attaining pupils and the most able so that greater proportions reach the higher standards
  - providing greater opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing skills across the curriculum
  - providing greater opportunities for pupils to think deeply about their mathematics and apply their conceptual understanding in a range of contexts
  - ensuring that staff use precise vocabulary when explaining concepts, especially in mathematics.
- Continue to improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - adding greater rigour to the school's safeguarding procedures and raising governors' awareness of the potential risks children face
  - increasing the rigour with which governors scrutinise the work of the school and hold leaders to account
  - ensuring that plans for the spending of funding for disadvantaged pupils contain precise targets so that the success of initiatives can be measured.

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

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable turbulence in the school. For a variety of reasons, many of which have been beyond the headteacher's control, there has been a high turnover of staff and leaders. This instability has, until recently, led to a decline in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and, consequently, the progress that pupils make from their different starting points.
- Leaders have been too slow to adapt to revisions in the 2014 national curriculum for mathematics and its raised expectations for pupils. For example, the school has only recently made changes in its approach to the teaching of mathematics, and across the school there is a lack of clarity about the requirements of a mastery curriculum. This has led to teachers' expectations being too low and a weakening of pupils' progress.
- Leaders have not addressed adequately all of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Teachers are still not providing the most able pupils with sufficient levels of challenge. This is especially the case in mathematics.
- Since the beginning of this academic year, there has been a greater stability in teaching staff. The headteacher has revised the school's leadership structure and this has led to greater clarity regarding leaders' roles and responsibilities. The quality of teaching is now improving, as are pupils' outcomes. However, recent improvements have not yet been sufficient to undo previous underachievement.
- The headteacher leads the school with passion and a steely determination. She is ably supported by a team of skilled senior leaders, many of whom are new to, or have recently returned to, their roles. Collectively, they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and, more significantly, what needs to be improved. School development planning is focused on the appropriate areas and leaders' actions are having a demonstrable impact on pupils' outcomes. However, a number of leaders' initiatives have not yet been in place long enough to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good across the school.
- Leaders are now holding teachers more strictly to account for the quality of their teaching and the progress their pupils make. The headteacher has strengthened procedures for managing staff performance and ensured that it is linked to priorities in the school's development plan. Leaders have established a detailed programme of monitoring, and teachers are now taking greater ownership of their own professional development. Leaders' records show that they do not shy away from difficult conversations and have, this year, dealt with poor performance decisively and uncompromisingly. Although long overdue, these actions have improved the effectiveness of leadership and raised the quality of teaching.
- The school's plans for supporting disadvantaged pupils lack precision. Leaders have not defined clearly enough the criteria they will use to measure the success of their actions. Consequently, leaders and governors do not have a clear understanding of which initiatives are having the greatest impact and which are proving less effective. This is limiting their ability to hold staff to account or to plan future provision.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a good understanding of pupils' additional needs. Together with the headteacher and other leaders, she has put in

place provision which is proving effective in addressing the barriers to pupils' learning. For example, the Learning Hub is having a significant impact on improving pupils' learning behaviours and supporting their social and emotional needs. A large number of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers. This is especially evident in key stage 2.

- Sports premium funding is used effectively. Leaders have targeted spending on an external coach who provides high-quality physical education (PE) lessons. This is raising outcomes for pupils and developing staff expertise and confidence. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular clubs.
- Leaders ensure that the school's curriculum is well suited to the needs of its pupils. Pupils enjoy a wide range of first-hand experiences, for example trips to the beach and to Dartmoor. This enhances the knowledge and understanding through which pupils can develop their skills. The school environment is vibrant and engaging. It celebrates pupils' achievements and promotes effective learning.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. This is done through the curriculum, as well as in assemblies and other whole-school events.
- The majority of parents and carers are positive about the school. For example, one parent wrote: 'We are extremely happy with Willowbrook School. The staff are wonderful, friendly, caring and professional. They provide exciting and inspiring opportunities for our child, who always runs into school with a smile on his face and leaves each day with happy tales to tell.' Some parents raised concerns, correctly, about the quality of teaching over time, as well as the level of challenge the school is providing for its most-able pupils.

## **Governance of the school**

- Since the previous inspection, governors have not maintained a strategic oversight of the school. They did not recognise the degree to which the school had declined and, consequently, have been too slow to react.
- Governors are aware that the school is now improving and that leaders' actions are having an impact on pupils' outcomes. However, they rely too heavily on the information that leaders provide and do not yet have adequate systems in place to check the accuracy of this information for themselves. The minutes of governing body meetings do not provide evidence that governors are holding leaders to account with a sufficient level of rigour.
- Governors do not pay safeguarding the attention it requires. They do not have a secure understanding of the potential risks that pupils face. Additionally, not all governors recognise the importance of a vigilant culture. For example, governors do not fully understand that child protection and safeguarding concerns can happen anywhere and at any time.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. This was a view shared by the vast majority of parents.

- School leaders have a good understanding of the vulnerabilities faced by pupils in the school. They have ensured that staff have received appropriate training and that they understand the school's procedures. Staff have a secure knowledge of the different signs of abuse they need to be alert to.
- Leaders' checks to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children are in line with statutory guidance. However, the school's safeguarding records do not provide leaders with information about when these checks should be updated. As a result, checks for some long-established staff and volunteers have not been revisited for a number of years.
- Leaders do not ensure that procedures put in place to keep pupils safe are adhered to at all times. For example, during the inspection, older pupils had unsupervised access to the car park and drive gates. Leaders rectified the situation straightaway and put systems in place to ensure that it would not be repeated.
- Leaders have established effective partnerships with a range of external agencies. They also work closely with parents to ensure that the school's most vulnerable pupils are kept as safe as possible.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes to the school's teaching staff. This has led to instability and a lack of continuity for pupils. During this academic year, nine new teachers have joined the school, many of whom are in the early stages of their teaching careers. There is now stability, as well as a greater capacity for continued improvement. Among the teaching staff, there is a collective purpose and a strong desire to raise pupils' outcomes. Nonetheless, although improving rapidly, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good across the school.
- Until recently, the school has not had an effective system for monitoring the progress that pupils make. Over time, leaders and teachers have not identified pupils at risk of falling behind, and this lack of awareness has resulted in a significant decline in pupils' outcomes. Phase leaders are now monitoring the progress of all pupils from their individual starting points. Consequently, teachers have a stronger understanding of pupils' current attainment in relation to where it should be. Although not yet good, targeted interventions and raised expectations are continuing to strengthen the outcomes of pupils currently in the school.
- Teachers do not have a secure understanding of how to deliver the 'mastery' element of the national curriculum. In reading, writing and mathematics, this continues to have a detrimental impact on pupils' outcomes, particularly for those pupils capable of working at the higher standards.
- Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to consolidate their learning and practise their skills. This is leading to greater proportions of pupils working within the expectations for their age. Teachers do not, however, routinely provide sufficient challenge for middle prior-attaining pupils and the most able. This is limiting the proportion of pupils working securely above age-related expectations.
- Pupils are keen readers and display a developing grasp of higher-order reading skills. Younger pupils use their phonics to tackle unknown words and read with increasing

fluency and clarity. However, not all teachers provide pupils with sufficient guidance when choosing their books. As a result, some pupils read books which are not matched accurately to their reading skills.

- Teachers and other adults are developing the reading experiences of older pupils. A focus on broadening the range of high-quality fiction that pupils read is proving effective. Pupils are engaging more in reading activities and acquiring a widening vocabulary. This is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing, as well as their reading. For example, having studied 'Kensuke's Kingdom', pupils in Year 6 were using features of Michael Morpurgo's writing in order to improve the impact of their own writing.
- Teachers' high expectations for the quality of writing are leading to improved outcomes, especially at key stage 2. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to write for different purposes and to develop their skills across a range of genres. Teachers use a range of stimuli, including visitors and trips, to engage pupils and to provide real-life experiences for pupils to write about. For example, a visit from South West Water had supported pupils' writing about rivers and a link with the 'Tintin' stories had proved effective at engaging boys in their writing. The school's renewed approach to the teaching of spelling is having a demonstrable impact on the quality of pupils' writing.
- Teachers do not provide the most able pupils with sufficient opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills independently. Additionally, there are limited opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects across the curriculum. This is restricting opportunities for pupils to demonstrate that they are writing above the expectations for their age.
- The quality of mathematics teaching continues to improve across the school. Teachers have a better understanding of the expectations for the year group they teach and use this to plan activities which are appropriate to their pupils' needs. The school's focus on developing pupils' basic skills, for example multiplication tables, is proving effective in driving up standards. However, at times, a focus on these skills detracts from the mathematical concept being taught. Teachers generally display secure subject knowledge, although, on occasion, the language that teachers use to explain mathematical concepts lacks precision.
- There is an inconsistency in the school's understanding of how a 'mastery curriculum' can be used to deepen pupils' conceptual understanding and challenge their thinking. While teachers plan activities which are designed to challenge the most able pupils, these often merely require pupils to repeat the same task but with bigger numbers. Teachers do not provide pupils with opportunities to explain their understanding of concepts or to apply their mathematical skills across different contexts. This hampers pupils' progress and limits the proportion working at the higher standards.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's values of 'friendship, respect, teamwork and excellence' underpin its work. Pupils talk knowledgeably about each value and how it can be applied to everyday life.

Staff reward pupils for demonstrating one or more of the values and this adds to the sense of pride that pupils feel. Similarly, all pupils are members of a 'family group'. Pupils say that this makes them feel cared for.

- Leaders and staff know their pupils well. They have an in-depth understanding of pupils' vulnerabilities and address these proactively and effectively. As a result, pupils feel safe and well supported.
- Adults promote positive relationships with pupils and between pupils. This is proving effective at raising pupils' self-esteem. Adults provide strong role models and, for some of the school's most vulnerable pupils, this restores pupils' trust in adults.
- Pupils understand the difference between bullying and falling out with their friends. They say that bullying very rarely happens but if they are worried, or unhappy, any adult in school would help them. Some parents expressed concerns about bullying. However, these concerns were not shared by pupils or supported by inspection evidence.
- Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They can talk about the dangers associated with online technology and know not to share personal information. Similarly, pupils understand the need to eat a healthy diet, as well as the benefits of regular exercise.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They hold doors open for adults and are welcoming to visitors. On a number of occasions, pupils asked how inspectors were and whether they were enjoying their visit. Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and at break and lunchtimes. They play cooperatively together, whether on the playground or the field. The older pupils look out for the younger ones and involve them in their games.
- Across the school, the vast majority of pupils demonstrate positive learning behaviours. They listen attentively to adults and are respectful towards the opinions of others. Where behaviours are not as strong, these are well managed. Adults apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and are well supported by leaders.
- Leaders have targeted raising pupils' attendance. As a result, pupil absence is reducing and is now closer to the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also reduced considerably. Leaders have identified individuals requiring additional support with their attendance or punctuality. A range of strategies, including liaison with external agencies, are proving effective in this area.
- Leaders' introduction of the Learning Hub has been instrumental to an improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Staff in the hub provide pupils with the support they require to make the right choices and take responsibility for their actions. This enables pupils to successfully manage their behaviour when they return to their classroom.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Over time, inconsistent leadership and weaknesses in teaching have resulted in pupils underachieving significantly. Although current pupils are now making stronger

progress, this is still insufficient to address the gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils have not made strong progress from their starting points and, as a result, attainment remains too low.

- The most recently published assessment information shows that, in 2017, pupils' outcomes at the end of Year 6 were below the minimum expectation set by the government. This was because these pupils made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally from similar starting points, particularly in mathematics. Assessment information for pupils at the end of Year 2 indicated that there was similar underachievement for pupils in writing.
- For current pupils, in-school assessment information, supported by the work in pupils' books, shows that attainment at the end of Year 6 is much higher than it has been in recent years. This is at both the expected and higher standards. Nevertheless, the attainment of a large number of pupils is still not as high as it needs to be in order to represent strong progress from their starting points. This is especially the case for middle prior-attaining pupils and the most able.
- At the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils working at greater depth has increased in reading and writing. However, the proportions of pupils working at the expected standards in reading and writing have declined. This is despite these cohorts having similar starting points. The proportion of pupils assessed as achieving the expected standard in writing remains well below the national average.
- In all year groups and subjects, pupils' attainment has risen rapidly since the beginning of the academic year. This is evident in the school's assessment information, as well as in pupils' workbooks from across the curriculum. As a result, across the school, greater proportions of pupils are now working within the expectations for their age. However, the proportions of pupils working at the higher standards in writing and mathematics remain too low. This is due to limited opportunities for pupils to develop their higher-order skills and a legacy of underachievement.
- For the past two years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has been broadly in line with the national average. School information indicates that this will also be the case for pupils currently in Year 1. This represents strong progress from pupils' reading outcomes at the end of the Reception Year.
- As a result of the effective support they receive, for example in the Learning Hub, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress towards their academic and personal targets.
- An engaging and exciting curriculum is ensuring that pupils enjoy their learning across a wide range of subjects. As in English and mathematics, a delay in implementing changes to the national curriculum means that although pupils are making progress, they are not yet working consistently with the skills and knowledge expected for their age.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The majority of children enter the school with knowledge, skills and understanding below those typically expected for their age. From these starting points, they make strong progress so that, by the end of Reception, the proportion of children leaving early years at a good level of development is approaching the national average. The



majority of children are well prepared for their transition to Year 1.

- The early years leader has a detailed understanding of the provision's strengths and weaknesses and has been proactive in addressing a decline in standards. Together with a newly formed early years team, she has put in place systems and procedures to improve the quality of teaching and, consequently, children's outcomes. The early years leader has a clear vision for what needs to happen next in order to ensure that the early years provision continues to improve.
- Teachers and other adults know their children well. They use this knowledge to design activities which meet children's needs. For example, having identified that a number of children enter Nursery with weaknesses in their oracy, teachers planned additional opportunities for children to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Staff have a good understanding of the early years curriculum. They plan activities which develop children's knowledge and skills across the different areas of learning. Staff make effective use of the vibrant and engaging environment. Children are active participants in their own learning and enjoy finding out new things.
- Children's behaviour in the early years is good. Children treat each other and their environment with respect. They listen carefully to adults and respond appropriately to instructions.
- Staff nurture strong relationships with children, and as a result children feel safe and well cared for. This supports children's learning. During their time in early years, children develop positive attitudes to learning. For example, when playing independently or with their peers, children display good levels of resilience, persisting with activities for extended periods of time.
- Leaders ensure that parents are fully involved in their children's learning. Parents spoken with during the inspection felt that early years staff keep them informed about their children's progress. They also said that they are provided with useful information about the different ways in which they can support their children's learning at home.
- Safeguarding is effective in the early years and all statutory welfare duties are met.

## School details

Unique reference number	132778
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10048160

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Pearkes
Headteacher	Molly Marlow
Telephone number	01392 466208
Website	<a href="http://www.willowbrook.devon.sch.uk">www.willowbrook.devon.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@willowbrook.devon.sch.uk">admin@willowbrook.devon.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	23–24 June 2015

## Information about this school

- Willowbrook School is a larger than average-sized primary school. There are 15 classes – two per year group from Reception to Year 6 and one Nursery class.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below that found nationally.
- The mobility of pupils into and out of the school is higher than the national average.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- In 2017, the school did not meet government floor standards. These are the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning. A number of these visits were carried out jointly with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, staff, members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the school's evaluation of its own performance, its improvement plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of meetings of the governing body. They also considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to seek their views and listened to a selection of them read.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of parents during the inspection. They took account of 72 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as parents' written comments.
- During the first day of the inspection, children and staff in the Reception Year were on a school trip to Exmouth.

## Inspection team

Jonathan Dyer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Johns

Ofsted Inspector

Helen Springett

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018