

# Wilden CofE VA Primary School

High Street, Wilden, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK44 2PB

## Inspection dates

26–27 September 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not maintained the good quality of education provided by the school at the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders have not focused well enough on improving the quality of teaching. Action has not been taken promptly when teaching has fallen short.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good throughout the school, including in the early years. Teachers' expectations are often too low and pupils' outcomes, particularly in writing, are weaker as a result.
- School improvement processes are underdeveloped. The school's self-evaluation lacks the necessary analysis and its school improvement plan is weak.
- Outcomes for pupils are not good enough. Standards at the end of key stage 1 have been below the national average for the past two years.
- The link between the school's curriculum and the progress that pupils make is not clear enough.
- The sport premium is not used effectively to make sustainable improvements to physical education (PE) and sport.
- Leaders do not have sufficient impact on improving the subjects that they are responsible for. There is no clear leadership of the early years as a whole, from pre-school through to the Reception Year.
- A small group of parents have concerns about the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- Safeguarding is effective because leaders have made this area a priority. As a result, processes are appropriate and secure.
- Pupils behave well and follow the school's rules. They play well and enjoy coming to school. Rates of attendance are high.
- Governors are now starting to hold leaders to account more effectively.
- Recent improvements in the quality of teaching are beginning to show early signs of improved outcomes for pupils.

## Full report

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - self-evaluation is robust and analytical and that the school’s improvement plan is fit for purpose
  - leaders’ monitoring, and the school’s performance management systems, lead to demonstrable improvements in the quality of teaching
  - middle leaders have a clear impact on improving the subjects that they are responsible for
  - governors hold leaders fully to account, taking prompt action when necessary
  - the curriculum, and the school’s approach to assessment, have a direct impact on improving outcomes for pupils, particularly in writing
  - there is defined leadership across the whole of the early years provision
  - the sport premium is spent effectively.
- Raise the quality of teaching and thus improve outcomes for pupils, particularly in writing, by ensuring that:
  - all staff have consistently high expectations of what pupils can do
  - teaching practices are consistent throughout the school.
- Improve the school’s approach to recording and following up allegations of bullying so that it is rigorous and transparent.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders have not maintained the good quality of education provided by the school at the time of the previous inspection. As a result, standards have dropped and the school now requires improvement.
- Leaders have not focused well enough on the quality of teaching. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are underdeveloped. For example, during the inspection, leaders were unable to demonstrate how standards are checked and how teaching staff are held to account.
- Performance management systems are in place but these have not been kept up to date. As a result, leaders have been too slow to tackle weaknesses in teaching and this has had an impact on the progress pupils make.
- The school's systems for evaluating its own strengths and weaknesses are similarly underdeveloped. The school's self-evaluation summary lacks analysis and does not identify the school's strengths and weaknesses clearly enough. As a result, leaders do not have a thorough understanding of how to improve the school.
- The school's development plan is not fit for purpose and it is unlikely to lead to the improvements needed. For example, the plan does not identify dates when actions will be carried out or milestones for expected improvements. Criteria for deciding how successful actions have been are not measurable. The plan is not complete.
- The rationale behind the school's curriculum is not clear. Leaders and governors have not given sufficient thought to what is taught and why it is taught. Similarly, the rationale behind assessment is similarly underdeveloped. The link between what pupils are taught and the progress that they make is not explicit.
- The sport premium has not been spent effectively to make additional and sustainable improvements to PE and sport. For example, some of the funding has been used to provide staff with PE kits and to finance the purchase of similar kits for parents to buy back for their children. Although the school reports that this has improved attitudes to sport, it is difficult to see that this has had a demonstrable impact on standards.
- Leadership in the school is underdeveloped. Members of the teaching staff have responsibility for different subjects but they have limited knowledge of how to carry out their leadership roles effectively. This means that leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of what standards are like in their subjects and how to improve them.
- A small proportion of parents are dissatisfied with the school. They are concerned about the leadership and management of the school. Inspection evidence confirms parents' views that leadership and management require improvement.
- The same small group of parents also expressed concerns about discipline, particularly bullying. The inspection did not find that parents' concerns were well founded in this respect. However, the system for recording and following up on allegations of bullying is not sufficiently robust. This leads to a lack of confidence, among a small number of parents and pupils, that their concerns are taken seriously and addressed fully.
- The school is a friendly and welcoming place. The very small size of the school gives it

a 'family' feel because everyone knows everyone else. Pupils are taught about values, such as friendship and trust, through a daily act of collective worship. Staff ensure that these values are modelled for pupils routinely. As a result, pupils display these values as they go about their day.

- Most parents are positive about the school and say that their children are happy at Wilden. They appreciate the school's welcoming ethos and the kind and nurturing approach of the staff. Many of the parents who responded to Parent View chose to leave additional comments in support of the school. Comments such as 'My child enjoys attending this school and feels very happy and settled' were typical.
- The local authority is providing the school with appropriate support and challenge. Advisers visit the school regularly and many of the shortcomings identified by this inspection had already been identified and actions put in place to support the school to address them. For example, the local authority has commissioned a local leader of education to work with the school's leaders and governors.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors acknowledge that they have not held leaders to account sufficiently for the deterioration in the school following the previous inspection. They allowed the school's downturn to carry on for too long rather than taking decisive action to reverse it.
- Governors are highly committed to the school and want the very best for pupils. They have taken advice from the local authority and acted on it. It is clear that the governing body is becoming more effective and is now better able to hold leaders to account. They now have an improved understanding of the need to take appropriate action promptly when necessary.
- Governors support the school very well. They have a thorough understanding of the duty of care they have to leaders, staff, pupils and parents. Governors visit the school regularly, helping them to establish strong working relationships. They know their role is a strategic one and they do not trespass into the operational running of the school.
- Governors now have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They recognise that improvements are needed and these need to happen quickly.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead and her deputy ensure that safeguarding has a suitably high focus in the school. They have an excellent understanding of the role and are deeply committed to ensuring that all pupils are safe and well looked after.
- The deputy lead is a safeguarding lead for the local authority. The school benefits from her knowledge and expertise.
- The school's procedures for dealing with child protection concerns are appropriate and well established. Leaders take concerns seriously and respond appropriately to them. Suitable action is taken in a timely fashion when necessary. Detailed records are kept securely, showing concerns that have been raised about pupils and the action that has

been taken in response.

- Systems around the safer recruitment of staff are secure. The school's single central record of employment checks meets statutory requirements. The school's systems are increasingly robust and checks are made to ensure that processes are fit for purpose. For example, an audit of the single central record was carried out recently, at the school's request, to satisfy leaders and staff that everything is as it should be.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching has not been consistently good, across all year groups, since the previous inspection. Where teaching has been weaker, pupils have made slower progress. In some cases, pupils have been subject to weak teaching for extended periods of time. This has had a negative impact on their attainment.
- The leadership of teaching is not strong enough. Teachers are not provided with sufficiently clear guidance on what should be done and when. It is this lack of direction, rather than a lack of willingness, that has resulted in the quality of teaching becoming weaker.
- Changes are not properly thought out and, at times, appear to be 'knee jerk' reactions to issues that have been identified. For example, during the inspection, some classes had started to teach pupils to use a particular style of joined handwriting but others had not. The rationale for this was unclear, as was the timeframe for its introduction and the approach to be used.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Too often, pupils' personal circumstances or the learning difficulties they encounter are seen as barriers preventing them from making good progress rather than hurdles to be cleared. This lack of high expectations means that some pupils do not do as well as they should.
- There have been recent improvements to the quality of teaching. Where teaching is better, teachers model and demonstrate new learning effectively. When this is the case, pupils understand clearly what they are taught and make better progress.
- The quality of phonics teaching is starting to improve. Staff have been provided with training to help them to teach phonics effectively. For example, some staff now enunciate sounds clearly and ensure that pupils pronounce individual sounds correctly too. This enables pupils to be successful when breaking words into sounds in order to spell and blending individual sounds into words in order to read.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff know pupils well and value them as individuals. As a result, classrooms are usually harmonious and happy places. The foundations of good learning environments are in place.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The supportive atmosphere in classrooms encourages pupils to become more

confident. For example, individual pupils speak clearly and confidently in front of the school when reading prayers during the daily collective worship.

- Pupils know about a variety of ways to keep themselves and others safe. They know about the importance of e-safety and safe use of the internet. For example, pupils understand, at a level appropriate to their age, the risks posed by social media.
- On the whole, pupils show good attitudes to learning. They enjoy finding out more about the subjects they learn about. Pupils say that lessons can be fun and they particularly enjoy the educational visits they go on, such as to the Science Museum and on a residential visit to an activity centre.
- Pupils know about bullying and the forms it can take. They know that they should tell an adult if they or a friend are being bullied. Most pupils feel safe from bullying and have faith in staff's ability to sort things out quickly if problems do arise.
- A small number of pupils told the inspector that they think that bullying is a problem at the school. However, the types of issues they described did not amount to bullying, but to other sorts of behavioural issues and annoyances.
- The inspection found that, although there is clear evidence that appropriate action is taken in response to inappropriate behaviour, systems for dealing with allegations of bullying are not well enough developed. The lack of a clear process for following an allegation from the moment it is made until a conclusion is reached leads to a small number of parents and pupils being concerned, wrongly, that there is a big problem with bullying at the school.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well both in their classrooms and during less structured parts of the day. They move around the school calmly and sensibly. For example, they enter the hall silently for collective worship, sitting quietly and listening carefully. They know the school's rules well and follow them carefully.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and well mannered. They spoke confidently to the inspector and were keen to talk about their school and their work.
- Incidents of challenging or inappropriate behaviour are recorded appropriately when they arise. A form is used to ensure that the same information is recorded for all incidents. Completed forms show that appropriate action is taken in response to incidents.
- Rates of attendance are consistently high. For the last three academic years the school's overall attendance figure has been a full percentage point above the national average. This means that pupils miss very little of their education.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 fell in 2017 so that the proportion of pupils that attained the expected standard was below the national average in mathematics and well below it in writing. The proportion of pupils that reached the higher standard was

also below average. The small size of each group of pupils means that caution is needed when considering assessment data.

- The proportion of pupils that reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was well below the national average in 2016 and 2017.
- Outcomes in writing require improvement throughout the school. Pupils' handwriting is often poorly developed for their stage of learning. Words are often spelled incorrectly, including simple common words and those that are phonetically regular, that is, where sounds are represented by the most common spelling. This is partly as a result of teachers' expectations being too low, and is partly a legacy of the weak teaching that pupils have been subject to in the past.
- Teachers' low expectations are evident in pupils' exercise books. Pupils' work is often poorly presented and lacks care. This is not tackled. Staff do not give pupils a clear enough idea of what is expected of them, and they accept work too readily when pupils have not done their very best.
- Outcomes for pupils are starting to improve. As a result of improvements in the teaching of phonics, a higher proportion of Year 1 pupils reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2018. A far higher proportion of pupils reached the expected level in writing in 2018 than in 2017.
- Pupils know about a range of subjects at a level appropriate to their age. For example, they can name and talk about the world's major religions. They learn to sing competently and are given opportunities to perform.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- The pre-school provision, although already the responsibility of the governing body, was registered as a separate early years provider until three years ago when it was brought 'in house'. Although the pre-school has been part of the school since 2015, no one has been identified to lead the early years as a whole. The class teachers lead the Reception Year and the pre-school manager leads the provision for two- and three-year-olds. This leads to a lack of continuity and consistency across the early years.
- The accommodation for the youngest children is not suitable for their needs. The two small rooms that have been allocated to the pre-school provision are on the first floor of the building, at the top of a set of steep, dog-legged stairs. The pre-school area does not have space for changing nappies or for very young children to take a nap. Leaders are aware of these issues and are taking steps to address them.
- The positioning of the pre-school provision means that there is no direct access to the outdoor areas. However, staff ensure that they plan outdoor time at least once in each morning or afternoon session. The dedicated outdoor space for the pre-school children provides a range of interesting and stimulating opportunities.
- The environment for Reception Year pupils is of a much better quality than the pre-school provision. The classroom is large and bright, providing ample space for the small number of pupils in the year group. The classroom leads directly to a small outdoor space meaning that children can choose to go outside during their self-chosen learning time.

- On the whole, children join the early years with skills and abilities that are typical of their age. Most of the children who attend the pre-school at Wilden continue into the Reception Year. The proportion of children that attain a good level of development has been similar to the national average for the last two years. This means that most children are ready for Year 1 by the end of the Reception Year.
- Although children make reasonable progress overall, some children do not do as well as they should. This is because staff do not always have high enough expectations of what children are capable of achieving and set their sights too low.
- Relationships between staff and children are strong. The adults know the children, and their individual likes and dislikes, well. The children trust the adults that work with them and speak to them confidently and with interest.
- The children in the early years enjoy the activities they are given to do. They listen carefully and follow instructions. For example, during the inspection, the pre-school children mixed ingredients together to make their own playdough successfully.
- The children learn and follow rules designed to keep them safe at school. For example, the pre-school children learn to go downstairs on their bottoms, to prevent them from tripping and falling. The children behave well, playing alongside each other and then with each other as they grow older.



## School details

Unique reference number	109627
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10046089

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Parkin
Headteacher	Vanessa Young
Telephone number	01234 771313
Website	<a href="http://www.wilden.beds.sch.uk">www.wilden.beds.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@wildenschool.org.uk">office@wildenschool.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2014

## Information about this school

- At the time of the previous inspection, separately-registered early years pre-school provision (EY469977) was operating on the school site. The separate registration is no longer in place and the pre-school provision is now part of the school.
- In addition, the school was a lower school, at the time of the previous inspection, taking pupils from four to nine years of age. In line with other schools in the local area, the school has transitioned to become a full primary school, taking its first group of Year 5 pupils in September 2017 and its first Year 6 pupils in September 2018.
- The school now caters for pupils from two to 11 years. The school has four, mixed-age classes. Two classrooms have been built to accommodate the school's additional year groups.
- Wilden Primary is a Church of England school and part of the Diocese of St Albans.
- A local leader of education has been commissioned to provide support for the school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. The inspector observed parts of eight lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked closely at the work in exercise books and talked to pupils about their work. The inspector looked at a range of the school's documents, including assessment information.
- The inspector checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- Meetings were held with leaders, governors, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils.
- The inspector spoke with pupils throughout the inspection. The inspector took account of the 41 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 39 free-text comments that were received.

## Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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