

Wilshere-Dacre Junior Academy

Fishponds Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 1NS

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has high expectations and is committed to the school's continued improvement. She provides strong and clear leadership for staff and pupils.
- With the support of the trust, the school has made significant progress. Trust leaders are very effective. They provide high-quality support and challenge.
- Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their improvement plans focus on appropriate priorities and demonstrate their high expectations for the school.
- Pupils make good overall progress across the school. In 2018, attainment at key stage 2 was above average at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils are confident, respectful and polite. They continue to develop well, both in and out of the classroom, because of their positive attitudes to learning.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. It continues to improve because leaders provide staff with effective support, training and challenge.
- The school ensures that pupils are safe and well cared for at all times. Pupils say that they feel safe and that they enjoy school. They attend well.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the school has an effective and interesting curriculum that deepens pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. As a result, pupils are caring and responsible. They are well looked after and kept safe.
- Subject leadership in English and mathematics is highly effective. However, the leadership of other subjects is not as strong.
- Most current pupils are making good progress from their starting points. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is less consistent.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge poorly presented work. As a consequence, the quality of pupils' handwriting varies. In some cases it is poor.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop leadership and management by:
 - providing leaders of other subjects with the additional support, training and challenge that will enable them to have the same degree of impact on outcomes as has been achieved in English and mathematics
- Improve pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make progress that is at least in line with that of other pupils with similar starting points nationally
- Ensure that all teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils' handwriting and presentation skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is uncompromising in her commitment to raising standards. Leaders are highly focused on ensuring that the school continues to improve. As a result, pupils' key stage 2 attainment across reading, writing and mathematics combined was above the national average in 2018 at both the expected and higher standards. Pupils currently in the school make good overall progress as a result of the continued improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders' evaluations of the schools' strengths and areas for development are accurate. They clearly identify how they will tackle areas where they know that the school needs to improve further. The current improvement plan contains well-focused targets that are reviewed by leaders and the trust's regional director. This rigorous approach is effective in improving the quality of provision.
- Leaders use their evaluations of teaching to ensure that staff receive training and support that develops their individual needs. Leaders know where the quality of teaching is less consistent and they provide staff with effective support to improve their practice. Recently qualified teachers are well supported. Staff value the professional development they receive. They are proud to work at the school.
- Leaders hold staff to account effectively for pupils' progress. There are clear procedures to ensure that pupils do not fall behind. For example, teachers make good use of assessment information when planning learning activities. In addition, regular pupil-progress meetings are effective in checking the impact of the support that pupils receive. As a result, pupils make good progress overall.
- All leaders have clear roles and responsibilities and they are committed to making the school even better. The leaders of English and mathematics are highly effective. The leadership of other subjects is less strong, as some leaders do not yet have the skills required to fully develop their subject areas. In these instances, leaders require additional training and support to ensure that they drive improvements more effectively.
- Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent wrote, 'Wilshere-Dacre is a very caring and inclusive school.' Another stated, 'My son thrives at this inclusive school both academically and emotionally.'
- The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects and inspires the pupils. Leaders and teachers plan topics that interest pupils and provide inspiration for their writing. A variety of visits and visitors ensure that learning is extended beyond the school and the immediate vicinity. Pupils commented that they enjoyed the trips that are a part of every topic.
- Leaders have a good knowledge and understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are clear processes for identifying these pupils, which are understood by all staff. Pupils have detailed support plans, which ensure that they make good progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The

school's learning dispositions, such as resilience, reflection and collaboration are understood and modelled by pupils and staff alike. They are a central part of school life. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to develop these characteristics, for example through being part of the 'eco-council' and the 'Head Committee' that organises events and is consulted about certain policies, such as the one that deals with positive behaviour. Pupils have regular opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures.

- Pupils have an appropriate understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy, respect and tolerance. They use national events such as royal weddings, Brexit debates, and general elections to develop their awareness of life in modern Britain. Pupils are provided with opportunities to become members of a number of committees, which often involve them being elected in a democratic process. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is used well. The full-time sports coach delivers various clubs and lessons and acts as mentor to the other teachers. Staff have benefited from observing the teaching of a specialist, which has improved their confidence and expertise. Pupils benefit from a range of sports activities and a variety of lunchtime and after-school clubs.
- Leaders identify disadvantaged pupils' barriers to learning. They have developed clear strategies to provide them with targeted support both in and out of the classroom. However, although in some cases these strategies have led to improvement, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is not consistent across the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors bring a range of appropriate professional skills and experience to the school, which enable them to both challenge and support leaders.
- Governors are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They visit the school regularly and participate in monitoring activities alongside the leaders. They have high aspirations for the school and are committed to the school's continuing improvement.
- The trust's regional director monitors the work of the governing body. She visits the school regularly and provides leaders with effective challenge and support, acting as the educational expert for the school. Consequently, she has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has been very effective in supporting the progress that the school has achieved.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding leaders ensure that all training for staff is up to date and that procedures to keep vulnerable pupils from harm are in place. Leaders work well with external agencies so that they can support pupils and their families effectively.
- Leaders ensure that accurate safeguarding records are kept, and they have a good oversight of vulnerable families. Staff are vigilant for pupils' safety and confident to refer any concerns promptly.

- Leaders and governors undertake comprehensive recruitment checks to ensure that staff and volunteers are safe to work with pupils.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in the school and that they know how to keep safe, for example when they are using the internet.
- Parents who responded to Parent View overwhelmingly agreed that their child feels safe at Wilshere-Dacre Junior Academy.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders' actions have improved the quality and consistency of teaching across the school since the previous inspection. This means that current pupils in all year groups are making good progress.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They identify pupils' misconceptions and ask challenging questions that make pupils think deeply. They assess how well pupils are learning on a daily basis and adjust their planning accordingly to ensure that the work set is demanding for all.
- Teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils' learning. They understand pupils' different needs and provide them with advice, support and additional challenge. As a result, pupils with SEND in particular make good progress.
- Teachers allow pupils to discuss their work and confidently share their ideas. Pupils listen to each other and collaborate, often supporting each other and checking and editing each other's work.
- Teachers set clear targets for pupils and support them to assess their own progress. Pupils know what they need to do to improve their work, which helps develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils are given opportunities to develop their writing and reading skills across the curriculum. Each topic has a quality text linked to it. Each week pupils do some extended pieces of work in their topic books to improve their stamina in writing.
- Homework allows pupils to reinforce the learning that takes place in the classroom. Guidance for homework is given online so that parents can support their children's learning at home. Further support is given at the 'study support club', which takes place after school on a Friday. This strengthens learning and prepares pupils well for the work to come.
- Teachers manage the behaviour of pupils well. This supports their good attitudes to learning.
- Teachers use their assessments to help them plan feedback, support and extra help for pupils so that they can continue to improve their work. While most pupils are making good progress, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is not as consistent from their individual starting points.
- Teachers do not make consistently clear to pupils their expectations about the presentation of their work. Consequently, standards of presentation and handwriting are variable, and in some cases poor.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy school and they are grateful for the support and guidance that they receive from the school staff. One pupil, reflecting the views of others, stated, 'They always help us when we are not sure what to do.'
- Pupils are safe. They say that adults care for them and that they will always listen to them. For example, pupils told inspectors that if they feel sad there is a special room where they can go to share their worries. Pupils told inspectors that bullying rarely happens at Wilshere-Dacre and, when it does, adults deal with it swiftly.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe, for example through personal, social and health education lessons, assemblies and visiting speakers. Topics covered include resolving differences, being safe, healthy bodies and internet safety. This helps them to reflect on their personal safety.
- Teachers promote the school's learning dispositions of flexibility, agility, resilience, collaboration, reflection and creativity well. Pupils understand what they mean and explained, 'They help us to know how we learn.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils understand the school's system of rewards and sanctions, which staff apply consistently. The positive relationships fostered between pupils, and also between pupils and staff, ensure that there are very few incidents of poor behaviour. Low-level disruption is rare.
- Absence and persistent absence are both below national averages, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school and learning.
- Pupils are respectful and polite to each other and to adults. They move around the school sensibly and calmly and they behave well at break and lunchtimes. Pupils arrive at lessons ready to learn and they have good attitudes to learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Standards in key stage 2 are improving rapidly. In 2018, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' combined attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected standard was above the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher standard was also above the national average.
- In 2018, pupils' overall progress at the end of key stage 2 was in line with the national average for reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in reading and mathematics is better than in writing.
- Work in English and mathematics books and the school's own performance information show that pupils across the school make good progress. The majority are working at

age-related expectations, while a good proportion of pupils demonstrate skills and understanding at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.

- The school has recently adopted its own approach to measuring the progress that pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics. This is yielding useful information for subject leaders and teachers about how well pupils are doing.
- Strong leadership ensures that expectations of the progress of pupils with SEND are high. Planning is detailed and contributes well to pupils' progress. This includes those pupils who have an education, health and care plan. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their various starting points.
- In 2018, at the end of key stage 2, progress for disadvantaged pupils had improved in reading and to a lesser extent in mathematics, although they made less progress from their starting points than other pupils nationally.
- Regular pupil-progress meetings are held between teachers and senior leaders to check the progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Where progress is less than good, strategies are put in place to raise their attainment.

School details

Unique reference number	140611
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10058688

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	273
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Chris Cox
Headteacher	Sarah Smith
Telephone number	01462 459215
Website	www.wilshere.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@wilshere.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 September 2016

Information about this school

- Wilshere-Dacre Junior Academy is an average-sized junior school.
- The school became a sponsored academy in March 2014. The sponsors are REAch2 Academy Trust.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive SEN support is above the national average, and the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classrooms to observe teaching, pupils' learning and behaviour. The headteacher joined the inspectors on some of these classroom visits.
- A wide range of pupils' workbooks were examined by the inspectors throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, assistant heads of school, a group of subject leaders, the inclusion leader, newly qualified teachers and the school business manager.
- The lead inspector met with the governors. In addition, the lead inspector met with the trust's regional director.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at breaktimes and lunchtimes, to seek their views. A meeting was also held with one group of pupils more formally to discuss their learning and other aspects of school life. The lead inspector also attended a whole-school assembly.
- Inspectors listened to some pupils in Year 2 reading their books. Inspectors spoke to the pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school website and a range of school documents, including: assessment information; minutes from governing body meetings; the school's own evaluation; improvement plans; and records about safeguarding and attendance
- Inspectors considered the 86 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 54 responses to the Ofsted free-text system. Inspectors also talked to some parents at the beginning of the day. Additionally, inspectors took account of the 27 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the 102 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Kevin Rae, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Pauline MacMillan	Ofsted Inspector
John Craig	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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