

# Willow Fields Community Primary School

Winslow Close, Witherwack, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR5 5RZ

## Inspection dates

25 to 26 June 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- In the past, weaker teaching and a weaker curriculum led to gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Although leaders are working effectively to address this, there remain gaps in pupils' learning that need to close, particularly for pupils in key stage 2.
- Leaders have eliminated weak teaching. However, there remains some variability in planned activities, which do not always provide pupils with sufficient challenge to ensure that they consistently reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils' absence remains above the national average. The proportion of pupils regularly absent from school is also above the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The teaching of phonics is variable. Although pupils receive a daily lesson, teachers choose resources from a range of schemes. As a result, pupils are not making the speedy progress in acquiring their phonics skills as quickly as they could.
- In the early years, the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development increased in 2019. However, next steps planning lacks the precision needed to ensure that children make the best possible progress from their low starting points.
- Pupils' historical outcomes, at the end of key stage 2, have not been good enough. In 2018, pupils' combined outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics were well below the national average and pupils' progress in reading was well below average. Appropriate plans are in place to improve the teaching of reading further.

### The school has the following strengths

- The current headteacher has high expectations and is very ambitious for the school's future. As a result, pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching are improving.
- With great tenacity, leaders, including governors, have tackled the findings from the school's most recent monitoring inspection effectively and quickly.
- Leaders have worked hard to create a cohesive curriculum. Schemes of work identify precisely the subject-specific knowledge and skills that are to be taught in each year group. Subject leaders are at various stages of implementation of these schemes.
- Pupils say that they now feel so much safer in school. Parents and carers endorse this view.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further by ensuring that:
  - planned activities offer challenge to pupils so that they can achieve as highly as they are able to
  - there is a continued focus on broadening pupils' vocabulary in a range of subjects
  - plans to further improve the teaching of reading are realised
  - there is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics, including in the early years, which places greater emphasis on developing pupils' fluency and blending skills.
- Improve the effectiveness of the early years by ensuring that:
  - there is a greater focus on improving children's language development
  - the children's learning journals are sharply focused on their learning so that there is greater precision in planning for their next steps.
- Continue with efforts to close the remaining gaps in pupils' basic knowledge and skills, particularly in key stage 2, which are the result of weaker teaching and a weaker curriculum in the past.
- Work with a small number of parents to improve pupils' overall attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils regularly away from school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The current headteacher took up her post in September 2017. Her honest evaluation has enabled her to face very difficult challenges with grit and determination. She has dealt with the most pressing priorities and managed considerable staffing changes with resilience and professionalism. Despite the many difficulties she has faced, she has brought much needed stability to the school. She has raised expectations and aspirations successfully, and has instilled a strong sense of belonging and belief in the school.
- The same high expectations are shared by senior leaders, who are skilled practitioners. They are equally passionate about making a difference to the lives, dreams and aspirations of all pupils. They demonstrate the skills required to bring about further improvement.
- Subject leaders are equally enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their roles. They have contributed towards curriculum progression guidance documentation effectively and are beginning to effect change. However, some subject leaders are more recently appointed and have not had time to secure the same degree of improvements in their subject areas.
- The school's curriculum is exceptionally well-considered. Leaders have spent much time creating subject-specific schemes of work, which sequences the knowledge and skills for each year group. Leaders have also identified the specific vocabulary which is needed to enable pupils to gain a secure understanding of each subject. They have also identified non-negotiable basic skills in numeracy and literacy for each year group, which they expect pupils to apply. In subjects such as science, religious education and art, progression documents are in use already and are bringing about improvement to pupils' progress and attainment in these subjects. However, schemes of work in other subjects still need to be embedded.
- The headteacher has developed a regular cycle of monitoring. This is used to check the quality of teaching and learning effectively. Any weaknesses in practice are dealt with quickly and a detailed support package is put in place to secure improvement rapidly. That said, the headteacher does not shy away from making difficult decisions in holding staff to account to ensure that pupils' progress is not compromised.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used wisely. The pupil premium strategy is a detailed document that identifies the barriers to learning experienced by pupils. It identifies how the money has been spent and the effect on pupils' progress the spending has had. An updated report on this spending is presented to governors each term. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving and any remaining gaps in pupils' learning are beginning to close.
- Provision for pupils with SEND is improving. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is recently appointed, and is studying for the SENCo qualification to ensure that he undertakes his role with increasing assurance. He has reviewed the school's special educational needs register and has organised additional training for staff to ensure that teachers receive helpful information on managing a range of complex needs. However, some targets in pupils' individual plans are too broad to be used

effectively in order to tailor teaching to their needs. The SENCo is dealing with this and has produced a streamlined format as a means of sharpening targets, to identify specific tasks to support pupils' learning.

- The physical education and sport funding is used well. It is ensuring that more pupils have access to a range of after-school clubs and the opportunity to represent their school in competitions.
- Positive changes in the school's culture and ethos are evident in school. The outcomes of surveys of parents, pupils and staff reflect how pleased they are with the changes made by the headteacher since her appointment. Members of staff report improvements in the general behaviour of pupils. The lunchtime supervisors, for example, reported how much happier they are coming to school. Pupils too, remarked how much safer they now feel in school. As one pupil stated: 'Miss has turned our school upside down and inside out and made it so much better. I'm not afraid in school now.'

## **Governance of the school**

- Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable change in governance. There are very few longstanding governors still appointed. Those who remain acknowledge their role in overseeing the decline in standards at the school, but they are equally determined that this will never happen again.
- Governors recognised that, following events at the school, they needed to become increasingly active in their role. They sought the advice of a national leader of governance to review their effectiveness. Following the review, a detailed action plan was produced, which governors have addressed systematically. They are awaiting a further visit that will take them on to the next stage of their development.
- One of the governors' most important actions was to complete a skills audit to ensure that, as a whole, they had the required skills to undertake their role effectively. All new governors are now appointed for their skills. They receive a detailed induction programme and ongoing training, to ensure that all new governors undertake their roles successfully.
- A review of records of governing body minutes show that the level of questioning and challenge afforded school leaders has improved over time. Extremely detailed headteacher's reports and governors' frequent visits mean that they now have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement.
- Governors and the headteacher have taken effective action to improve the school's financial position. In a relatively short space of time, they have turned a deficit budget into one that is surplus.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that all appropriate employment checks are completed on anyone wishing to work at the school. At the monitoring inspection of October 2017, it was recommended that such checks be stored centrally in one record.

This is now in place. It is detailed and regularly reviewed for compliance by the safeguarding governor and headteacher.

- Regular child protection training and updates ensure that all staff recognise the important role they play in keeping pupils safe. The culture in the school is positive and members of staff are vigilant. Those staff who spoke to inspectors were very clear about the procedures that they must follow to report any concerns that they may have.
- The designated officer ensures that any concerns are referred in a timely manner. The associated record-keeping is detailed and the chronology accurate. It shows that senior safeguarding leaders work effectively with other agencies and parents to resolve concerns. This is an improvement since the school's most recent monitoring inspection of October 2017.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- Since the last inspection, there has been considerable staffing turbulence, which led to a decline in standards. Since the appointment of the current headteacher, there is now a cohesive approach to teaching, which has brought much clarity for staff. However, although weaker teaching has been eliminated, there remains some residual variation, particularly in the level of challenge planned and offered to pupils in some year groups, which needs to be strengthened further.
- Leaders have implemented a cohesive approach to the teaching of reading comprehension, which had previously not been the case. Teachers now follow a clear sequence that is consistent in all year groups. Pupils are exposed to a range of texts and spend time exploring technical vocabulary and descriptive phrases, for both meaning and effect. Subsequent lessons then require pupils to answer a range of questions about the text. This is bringing about improvements to current pupils' knowledge and skills. However, some questions do not probe pupils' thinking enough, and they do not require pupils to use their recently acquired vocabulary sufficiently to commit to memory.
- All pupils in the early years and in Year 1 receive a daily phonics lesson. Teachers follow the same order for teaching phonemes, but they do not routinely place enough emphasis on developing pupils' blending skills and letter formation within the sessions. This is sometimes related to the resources they choose, which come from a range of schemes, and it means that they do not consolidate pupils' skills as effectively or systematically as they could. For example, in Reception, a programme used to demonstrate how to write phonemes used a different script to that adopted by the school.
- There has been considerable investment in the purchase of new reading books, so pupils have enough books to be able to practise their reading skills. The books are matched to pupils' phonics skills, but expectations for pupils to read regularly at home are not embedded. Leaders have recently introduced an individual reading programme, so pupils can be heard to read more regularly in school to practise the vital reading skills of fluency and blending.
- Leaders know that there is more to do to encourage fluent readers to read for pleasure. Leaders have identified class stories that they want pupils to experience, to provide pupils with exposure to a range of texts. However, although book lists have

been developed, they are not implemented.

- The teaching of mathematics is consistent across the school. All teachers ensure that pupils practise their mathematical fluency and apply their skills to problem-solving activities. However, leaders recognise that pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding, which is the result of weaker teaching and a weaker curriculum in the past. This is holding pupils back from making accelerated progress, particularly in developing their abilities to reason mathematically and to use related facts confidently and successfully. Leaders have introduced an 'early bird' mathematics session, which revisits mathematical knowledge frequently, and is particularly linked to the core skills needed for number operations.
- Plans to improve and broaden pupils' essential vocabulary are well considered. However, they are not embedded fully across the curriculum.
- Pupils in all year groups demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen to share their work and to talk about their successes. Their work in books is well presented and reflective of the higher standards expected of them.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good.
- Leaders have worked hard to implement a well-balanced and sequential programme of study for pupils' personal development. It is supplemented successfully by focused study weeks which cover aspects of relationships, mental and physical health and well-being. Consequently, pupils are acquiring an age-appropriate understanding of how to lead healthy and safe lives, and how to form positive relationships, and they are increasing their feelings of self-worth. This is an improvement from the school's most recent monitoring inspection.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that there is always a trusted adult in whom they can confide should they wish to do so. They can explain how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. A detailed and progressive scheme of work for internet safety has been implemented in school. It has been developed by the assistant headteacher and covers all aspects of staying safe online. It reflects current issues linked to county lines and child criminal exploitation most effectively.
- Most parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, were happy about their child's welfare and safety. Only one parent raised concerns over bullying, but in speaking to pupils and reviewing records, indications were that this is unsubstantiated.
- Leaders have established a breakfast club for all pupils, which means that pupils get a good start to the day.
- A programme of assemblies, coupled with a thoughtful and well-considered personal and social curriculum, ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although leaders undertake a number of actions to improve pupils' absence, it remains above the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils regularly away from school is almost twice the national average. It is higher for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Leaders have issued penalty notices to a number of parents, which they hope will encourage more parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time.
- Over time, the number of exclusions of pupils for poor behaviour has decreased, with the last period of exclusion recorded in October 2018. Similarly, the number of recorded behaviour incidents reported to the headteacher has halved in the current academic year compared to the previous year. This is because of the positive changes that have been introduced to managing pupils' behaviour.
- The vast majority of pupils conduct themselves well across the day. Inspectors found that most pupils' behaviour in class is managed effectively by staff, and lessons flow without interruption. Occasionally, during unstructured parts of the day, pupils do not adhere as readily to the behaviour code. Leaders recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that pupils make the right choices at all times of the school day.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Pupils start at the school with knowledge and skills below what would be expected for their age and stage of development. However, over time, historical pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have not been good enough, particularly in reading. In 2018, they fell into the bottom 20% of schools.
- Weaker teaching in the past and a weaker curriculum meant that pupils did not practise their key skills frequently enough, which led to gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Although leaders are taking action to reduce such gaps, it is clear in talking to pupils that remaining gaps in pupils' knowledge need to be closed further, particularly in key stage 2.
- Pupils with SEND are making effective progress. However, occasionally, some targets in pupils' personal plans are not sharp enough for them to be used to plan effectively for pupils' needs. Leaders have already taken action to deal with this, and they have recently implemented new planning formats that require greater specificity when planning activities.
- Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are achieving more highly than was previously the case. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks and a review of recently submitted assessment information indicate that most pupils are applying themselves well. Occasionally, work that is set for some pupils is not challenging them consistently enough for them to achieve as well as they could and to catch up more quickly from slower rates of progress in the past.
- More pupils this school year have reached the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check than in 2018. The vast majority of pupils in Year 2 have also reached the required standard, following effective support and intervention programmes.

## Early years provision

## Requires improvement

- The early years leader is very recently appointed and is knowledgeable about how young children learn. She uses this knowledge effectively to ensure that the environment in Reception and Nursery reflects all areas of learning and that spaces are well resourced and accessible to pupils. She has ensured that all welfare requirements are met. However, she is in the earliest stages of developing her skills and is being supported to use children's assessment information to formulate improvement plans.
- Learning journals are in place for all children. They reflect the wide range of engaging activities experienced by children. Staff spend much time completing commentaries for children's journals, and they capture children's voice successfully. However, too many commentaries within the journals are descriptive and do not focus on the aspects of learning the evidence captures. As a result, planning for children's next steps in learning lacks precision.
- Children receive a daily phonics lesson, which contains all required elements. However, staff do not retain fidelity to one scheme, which means that some activities do not consolidate children's skills as effectively as they could. As a result, children are not making the speedy progress in acquiring the phonics skills of which they are capable.
- Staff engage in lots of talk with children. However, staff do not consistently focus on developing children's language skills and extending children's vocabulary. They accept single word responses from children too readily, which means that, although children are making effective progress, it is not as rapid as it could be, particularly in the area of learning associated with language development.
- Children enter the early years with knowledge and skills below those typically expected for their age and stage of development. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception this year is slightly above the national average of 2018. This reflects a marked improvement on previous years.
- Relationships in the early years are strong. Staff have established effective routines that enable children to be confident and feel secure in their surroundings. Children respond positively to instructions and there are high levels of respect evident. As a result, children behave well.
- Outdoor learning provides children with many opportunities to explore and investigate, and children do so readily. Children were observed working together happily, solving problems and negotiating. Consequently, pupils appear very happy in their surroundings.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors were complimentary about the support and advice they receive from staff. They felt that their children were well cared for, happy and safe.



## School details

Unique reference number	108783
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10087632

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	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Stewart
Headteacher	Lindsay Robertson
Telephone number	0191 549 1509
Website	<a href="http://www.willowfieldscommunityprimary.org.uk">www.willowfieldscommunityprimary.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@willowfieldsprimary.org.uk">office@willowfieldsprimary.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	9 June 2015

## Information about this school

- The school has grown in size recently, but remains slightly below the national average for primary schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is three times the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with an education health and care plan.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school provides a breakfast club for all pupils to attend.
- The school received a monitoring inspection in October 2017 that reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited teaching sessions across a range of subjects and in all year groups. The vast majority of these visits were conducted together with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and governors, including chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and spoke to pupils formally and informally about their work, and heard them read.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including assessment information, the school's self-evaluation report and action plans. The school's records relating to safeguarding were also checked.
- Inspectors considered the 28 responses, including eight free-text commentaries, to Ofsted's parental questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, inspectors considered 13 responses to the staff survey and 34 responses to the pupils' survey.

## Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kathryn McDonald

Ofsted Inspector

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