

Willowdown Primary Academy

Kings Drive, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 4FU

Inspection dates

25–26 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Despite recent improvements, leaders have not brought about consistently good teaching. Pupils' progress is too variable and standards are not rising quickly enough.
- Teachers do not consistently plan activities that closely match the needs of all pupils. The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, including those in the Reception class.
- The teaching of reading does not develop pupils' comprehension skills progressively.
- Too few pupils reach the higher standards in writing and mathematics. Teachers are not guiding pupils sufficiently in how to improve.
- The teaching of science is not consistently good across the school.
- Leaders do not analyse pupils' progress from starting points with sufficient clarity. This hinders them in identifying actions which would support pupils' further achievement.
- The school improvement plan is not fully developed. There is a lack of clarity as to how future improvements will be made.
- Some middle leadership roles, including the leadership of the early years, are not fully established. Not all middle leaders are ensuring improvements to teaching.
- Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) display challenging behaviour. Exclusions have reduced but remain high.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher is relentless in her drive to improve the school. The school is stabilising and improving after a period of considerable staff and leadership turnover.
- Leaders of the multi-academy trust are helping to strengthen the effectiveness of governance.
- The experienced Nursery leader is effective in her role. Children learn well in the Nursery.
- Leaders and teachers promote pupils' personal development especially well. Pupils are keen learners and present their work carefully.
- The welfare of pupils with SEND, some of whom have complex needs, is well supported. They make good progress in their learning.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and staff are vigilant for pupils' safety.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all leaders analyse and evaluate their monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress more effectively so that they hold a shared and precise picture of where improvements still need to be made
 - sharp plans for improvement include milestones that enable leaders and governors to more clearly check the effectiveness of their actions
 - middle leaders, including the leader for the early years, have the capacity and skill to bring about good teaching and achievement in their subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including in the Reception class, so that pupils, especially the most able, make consistently good progress by teachers:
 - using assessment information to match learning more precisely to pupils' needs
 - building pupils' reading skills progressively so that pupils of all abilities achieve well in reading
 - guiding pupils as to how to improve their writing so that more reach and exceed the expected standard
 - developing pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills more fully so that more reach the higher standard.
- Embed the new behaviour policy so that incidents of challenging behaviour are eradicated and the need for exclusion is reduced.
- Overcome pupils' persistent absence so that the rate of attendance rises to at least the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school joined Clevedon Learning Trust in September 2018. Over the past year, there has been considerable turnover of leaders, staff and governors. The new headteacher, who took up post at the start of the academic year, has brought momentum to the process of school improvement. She identified urgent areas for improvement and is tackling them effectively. However, leaders have not yet established consistently good teaching. Although teaching is improving and pupils' achievement is strengthening, standards have not yet risen consistently across all subjects and year groups.
- Leaders do not sufficiently analyse and evaluate the extensive information they hold about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. There is not a shared picture of the progress groups of pupils are making from their starting points. As a result, the significance of erratic progress across a key stage has not been recognised. The school works to priorities which they have identified with the trust. However, currently the quality of improvement planning lacks precision. It does not explain how and when the school intends to achieve its priorities.
- Almost all staff who completed the staff survey believe the school is better than at the previous inspection. They have confidence in leaders and in the headteacher, in particular. Teachers new to their career feel well supported, including with the management of behaviour. However, for some staff the challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils with SEND remains a concern.
- Middle leadership is not fully supporting the drive to achieve consistently high-quality teaching across the school. The subject leader for mathematics has established new ways of working across the school, which are strengthening pupils' achievement. The leadership of the early years has only recently been re-established. The new leader for English has been appointed but has not yet joined the school.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils with SEND is well planned and is supporting their achievement. The leader for pupils with SEND, supported by the newly appointed 'pupil premium champion', works effectively. They have developed additional teaching to support pupils' learning and welfare needs. Currently, leaders' knowledge of individual pupils' progress is strong, both for pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged. However, the evaluation of the achievement of the group as a whole is not rigorous. Despite significant levels of skilled support, some pupils with SEND have not fully overcome their challenging behaviour issues.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils now have access to all national curriculum subjects. They provide a curriculum that is relevant to pupils through studies such as the history of Bridgwater. They have started to improve the mathematics curriculum and the curriculum for English now includes opportunities for pupils to access modern and classical literature.
- The wider curriculum successfully addresses pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are developing an understanding of key values. Through 'webcam' links with children in Iraq they are aware of children whose lives are different to their

own. They feel 'off to a new start' having voted for new house names and they recognise this process as democracy. Important decisions are taken at house-team meetings, for example about banners and emblems. The pupils say the first duty of the head boy and head girl is 'to be a role model for others'.

- Leaders use the sport premium effectively. Sports coaches provide high-quality teaching for pupils and good professional development for teachers. Extended opportunities for exercise during lunchtime and after school are now involving more pupils in activity and sport.
- The headteacher's regular meetings with advisers from the trust have supported her in making rapid improvements. Equally, the trust is overseeing the planned extension of the school and the upcoming buildings project. This is enabling senior leaders to maintain their focus on school improvement.
- Some parents and carers have been unsettled by the rate of change, which for many children has involved changes in teacher mid-year. Most, however, feel that the school is improving and recognise that change was needed. A typical comment from parents was, 'I feel the new headteacher has made massive improvements in the school and it feels overall much safer and better managed.'

Governance of the school

- Since assuming the governance of the school, the multi-academy trust has supported the recruitment and training of governors for the local governing body. This has enabled local governors to build their strategic understanding of how to monitor the improvements in the school. Currently, this is limited by weaknesses in leaders' evaluation and school improvement planning.
- The chair of governors has benefited from networking meetings with leaders of governance across the academy trust. He has valued this opportunity to develop skills and support leaders to take the school forward. Recent minutes of the local governing body identify raised challenge and expectation of leaders.
- Governors meet regularly with groups of pupils to ascertain their response to changes in the school and to see where things could be further improved. This has enabled them to monitor the improvements to pupils' personal development and welfare.
- Governors discuss and review the use of the pupil premium and additional funding for SEND as a regular part of their meetings. This has contributed to maintaining the progress of these groups of pupils across a period of changes in staffing.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Support from the trust has ensured that policies are up to date and compliant with best practice. There has been extensive training in safeguarding this year for staff across the school and Nursery. The school's procedures for reporting concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm are well understood and followed by all staff. All records show the prompt and effective action leaders take to help families to keep their children safe.

- Rigorous checks are made on all adults who work with pupils. Administrators maintain records effectively. They follow up with requests for additional information on safe recruitment from outside contractors, in line with best practice.
- If pupils are late or do not arrive in school, staff make thorough checks to ascertain their whereabouts and safety. Parents do not always fully explain why their children are not in school.
- Governors support leaders by checking for themselves that safeguarding weaknesses from the past have now been fully overcome.
- A small number of parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, raised concerns about the disruption caused by the challenging behaviour of some pupils with SEND. However, others, particularly those spoken to when bringing their children to school, were positive about the safety of their children in school. A parent expressed this by saying, 'I really see a fantastic, well-organised and safe school.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, while improving, is not yet consistently good. The turnover of teachers has meant that the school has not yet embedded the best practice in all classes. Some teachers do not take sufficient account of the range of ability of the pupils in their class. They do not always provide the level of challenge which pupils need to achieve well.
- The school's approach to giving pupils guidance and feedback on what to include in their writing is not implemented consistently. Consequently, pupils do not build their skills and stamina for writing sequentially in a way which would help them to reach the higher standards. This is particularly evident with the most able pupils. However, the teaching of writing has been successful in enabling pupils to gain skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils now write for a range of different purposes and in different styles.
- The skills of inference and deduction in reading are not taught well enough. Pupils do not learn these skills progressively as they move through the school. In some classes, pupils practise these skills frequently, but in others teaching is too sporadic to secure pupils' progress. However, teachers now more regularly expose pupils to high-quality works of modern and classical literature. Year 6 pupils were observed studying Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' for plot line and character study. This absorbed their interest and well-planned activities enabled them to deepen their understanding of the play.
- Some aspects of mathematics are not taught consistently well. Pupils do not deepen their learning sufficiently through problem-solving and reasoning tasks. Some reasoning tasks are too limited for the most able pupils to be able to deepen their knowledge and explain their thinking.
- The teaching of science is variable and in some cases teachers do not plan lessons in line with the expected learning for the age of their class. However, in other classes, pupils are challenged in their learning and regularly apply their writing and mathematics skills by recording outcomes from experiments.
- Most pupils apply themselves to their learning well. They settle quickly to their tasks

and are diligent. They are keen to master new skills. For instance, older pupils practise forming cursive script with pens.

- Pupils with SEND are well supported by skilled teaching assistants. In some cases, adapted tasks help them to tackle work at the same level as their peers. For example, pupils who needed to catch up in Year 2 succeeded in writing a story because the teacher had given them additional picture cues.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Teachers give pupils time to practise writing the sounds as well as reading and saying them. As a result, pupils in key stage 1 use their phonic sounds well to help them read and spell unfamiliar words. Additional teaching enables pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to catch up in their learning.
- Religious education teaching gives pupils a good grounding in understanding the practices of other religions. Improvements to the teaching of history can be seen across the school. All teachers now incorporate an understanding of chronology and research into their teaching.
- Sports coaches teach the curriculum for physical education well. They maintain pupils' attention and explain the theory behind what pupils are learning. For example, Year 4 pupils were seen being taught how to improve their throwing by learning about momentum and direction.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The headteacher rightly prioritised this aspect of the school's work when taking up her appointment. Since then, leaders have extended opportunities for pupils' emotional health, active play, engagement and welfare. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, apply themselves to their learning and show pride in their work. Pupils' improved attitudes are contributing to the very recent improvements in their achievements.
- Extensive provision for purposeful play has been at the heart of the school's development this year. Pupils relish the opportunity to play freely. They cycle around the playground and drive small model cars around, sharing and using the space thoughtfully. There are wide opportunities for them to run, climb and take part in well-organised sport such as cricket. This initiative has significantly promoted pupils' well-being and readiness to learn.
- Opportunities for pupils to share any concerns are at the forefront of the school's provision for pupils' welfare. Pupils use the 'worry monsters' to highlight to staff what is concerning them. Adults meet with them promptly and pupils feel well supported and that their worries are taken seriously. Pupils have opportunities to take part in yoga classes which help them to feel calm and ready to learn.
- Older pupils value the respect they are given for taking on responsibility around the school. Leaders have helped Year 6 pupils to feel involved in the changes taking place in the school, for example involving pupil leaders in the interview process for staff. House-team leaders, deputies, recycling monitors and librarians all take their responsibilities seriously and commit to their roles.

- Pupils are friendly and say that they know not to use language which causes offence to others. They do not feel bullying is a concern in the school because there is always a trusted adult who will help them sort out friendship matters. They are taught well to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- The individual plans for pupils with complex SEND are detailed and are leading to improvements in pupils' achievement, welfare and for some, improving behaviour. However, as yet not all pupils are responding fully to the skilled support they receive.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Several pupils, almost all of whom have SEND, have complex and challenging behavioural needs. During the inspection, all were seen to be sensitively supported by skilled staff and the school was calm and orderly. School's comprehensive records show that incidents are reducing. Leaders have prioritised ensuring that the school is a safe place to learn. Consequently, there has been, across the year, a high number of exclusions compared to the national average.
- Pupils say they now understand the new behaviour policy and most disruptive behaviour has been eradicated. Leaders' records show that some previously challenging pupils have responded well to the school's guidance and support and are now accessing learning and making progress. However, records show on occasions incidents still occur. Some members of staff and parents reported their concerns to inspectors but overall the feeling is that incidents are reducing.
- The vast majority of pupils, again including those who have SEND, behave very well. They are courteous in addressing adults by name, holding doors and waiting their turn. Pupils settle quietly to their work. They move around school sensibly and behave well in assembly.
- Midday supervisory staff ensure that pupils behave well at lunchtime. Pupils understand which games and equipment they can use and cooperate well. They follow the rules, for example about not going onto the wet field unless they are wearing wellingtons.
- Behaviour in the breakfast club and after-school club is good. Pupils in breakfast club were seen having fun following a dance routine. Others sat quietly eating and talking. The staff provide good support. They ensure pupils' safety by prompt registration and returning pupils directly to class.
- Leaders are addressing issues of low attendance and high persistent absence as a priority using resources and expert advice from the trust. However, despite reductions there is still a relatively high number of persistently absent pupils. This reduces the school's overall rate of attendance to just below the recent national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils is inconsistent across the school. Standards overall are higher than at the time of the previous inspection, but they are still not high enough.

- Work in books shows that in many classes pupils have made inconsistent progress across the year. However, in all classes it can be seen that recent improvements to teaching have led to better progress.
- The most able pupils' progress has been hindered by teachers not consistently developing pupils' knowledge in writing and mathematics. As a result, despite recent improvements, too few pupils are working at the higher standard in these subjects. The most able pupils do not maintain the quality of their writing across different forms. They do not apply and explain their mathematical understanding sufficiently well.
- Progress information from the school and pupils' current work show that too few are confident in explaining the meaning of what they read. This is because, from Year 2 onwards, their skills of inference and deduction have not been built progressively over time. Currently, teaching in Year 2 and Year 6 is strengthening this aspect of learning and pupils' consequent progress.
- Although effective teaching in Year 6 is helping pupils to work more at the expected standard for their age in science, there is inconsistent teaching across the school. Pupils do not acquire scientific knowledge at the level expected in all year groups. Over time, this limits their achievement.
- Pupils demonstrate good phonic skills although currently the proportion of pupils working at the expected standard in Year 1 is lower than the national average. Improved teaching of phonics, particularly in the Reception class and in additional teaching, is now helping pupils to gain fluency in reading. Across the school, the enjoyment of reading is promoted well.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged and those with SEND make good progress in their learning because of high-quality additional teaching.
- Improvements to the teaching of religious education and history are strengthening pupils' knowledge in these subjects. They are learning at the appropriate level for their age across the school.
- Pupils are making strong progress in physical education and sport through effective teaching. They have opportunities to practise their skills in well-organised games at lunchtime and after school.
- Pupils' good attitudes to learning support them as they move on in their education. However, too many transfer to secondary school without the expected level of knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The leader for early years has taken up her post recently. She has not yet developed her strategy for improving the setting so that more children achieve well across early years. Currently, too few children build on the good progress they make in the Nursery to gain the knowledge expected at the end of the Reception Year.
- Teaching in the Reception class is not sharply planned to move all children on from their starting points. The teacher identifies that most start the year with typical development. They have particularly good knowledge of the world and of customs of different cultures. They are competent at using technology. The planning for children

to overcome gaps in other areas of the curriculum and deepen their learning is not precise enough. This is hindering some children from reaching and exceeding the expected level of development for their age.

- The leader for Nursery is experienced in her role and uses assessment well when children begin in the Nursery class. She and her staff swiftly identify when children have SEND or the need to catch up. The Nursery leader and identified 'key' staff work closely with parents. Parents contribute to the assessments of what their children can do, including through the two-year-old checks.
- The teaching of phonics by all staff is effective in both settings. This is promoting children's learning in reading and writing. The most able children's abilities are identified and motivating activities such as making books about their own interests engage them and allow them to practise their literacy skills. As a result of improvements to boys' literacy, the gap in attainment between boys and girls is closing.
- Teachers plan topics which extend children's ideas about the world such as the current topic on recycling. Children recognise they need to sort the rubbish before throwing it away and could name the materials they were reusing to make their models.
- Children with SEND, and those who are disadvantaged, make progress because of the extra teaching they receive from skilled early years practitioners in both settings. In these sessions, adults question and challenge children and help them to catch up.
- Relationships are positive in both settings. Children behave very well and sustain their activities with concentration. The welfare of children is given good consideration. For example, there is an area for children to sleep in the Nursery. Early years leaders recognise that, although adequate, further development of changing facilities is necessary.
- The arrangements for safeguarding in early years are good. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements cover the Nursery, extended-day and all-year-round provision.

School details

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 140220 |
| Local authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 10088323 |

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

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 243 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Alister Christopher |
| Headteacher | Rosanna Roberts |
| Telephone number | 01278 558 758 |
| Website | www.willowdownprimary.co.uk/ |
| Email address | info@willowdownprimary.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 19–20 April 2017 |

Information about this school

- In September 2018, the school became part of the Clevedon Learning Trust. At the same time, the new headteacher was appointed. The deputy headteacher was new to the school in January 2019. The leadership team is continuing to undergo change.
- The school has grown since the previous inspection and is developing towards a two-form entry school to serve the large estate which is being built around it.
- The school's Nursery operates an extended day and is open all year round. It takes children from two years old. Most children enter the Reception class from the Nursery. During the course of this year, pupils across the school have been reorganised into single-aged classes. A larger proportion of pupils join the school at times other than the usual times.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is above the national average and in some year groups is very high.

- 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 majority of pupils are of White British heritage. However, the proportion of pupils joining the school with English as an additional language is rising.
- There are breakfast and after-school clubs which are managed by the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in each class and in the small group interventions which support pupils with extra teaching. Many of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors examined samples of pupils' work across the curriculum. They reviewed the information the school holds about pupils' progress.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders. Inspectors reviewed documentation in relation to the school's monitoring, evaluation and development.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the trust and with the chair of governors.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's policies and procedures in respect of safeguarding and discussed safeguarding with several members of staff. They reviewed records and logs of pupils' attendance, behaviour and exclusion. Inspectors observed pupils' attitudes and behaviour in assembly, at lunchtime, in the breakfast club and around the school, as well as in lessons. They also reviewed the welfare requirements in early years, including those arrangements for two-year-old children.
- An inspector read with a group of Year 1 pupils and met with a group of key stage 2 pupils to review their reading.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils to gather their views of the school. In addition, an inspector met with all Year 6 pupils. They spoke about their roles and responsibilities in school. Both inspectors spoke with pupils and staff at lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the views of staff through the 27 responses to the staff survey. In addition, an inspector met with teachers new in their career to ascertain the professional support the school was providing for them.
- Inspectors met with parents as they brought their children to school. They also reviewed the 41 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and one telephone call from a parent.

Inspection team

Wendy Marriott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Wendy D'Arcy

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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email 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.

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, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: 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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019