

# Willowpark Primary Academy

Vulcan Street, Oldham, Greater Manchester OL1 4LJ

## Inspection dates

26–27 June 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders have transformed the school. Their strong leadership and high aspirations have improved teaching, behaviour and pupils' outcomes so that these are now good.
- Leaders have tackled the legacy of poor outcomes and teaching from the predecessor school. Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND), now make good progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers have honed their practice because they are well supported by a range of training opportunities. Teachers' planning is meticulous. Writing is not as consistently strong as it is in reading and mathematics. Some pupils make too many spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. Handwriting is not of consistently high quality among some pupils.
- The school provides a wide range of support for pupils' personal and social and health development, including their mental well-being.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils develop their skills and knowledge in a range of subjects. At times, opportunities for pupils to think deeply about their work in subjects other than mathematics and English are limited.
- Pupils behave sensibly in and around the school. They are polite and respectful.
- Pupils are taught to read effectively. Younger pupils in Reception and Year 1 learn their phonics skills well. The vast majority reach the phonics standard by the end of key stage 1.
- A number of pupils enter the school mid-year from a range of settings and countries. These pupils are supported well. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
- Children in the early years make good progress from starting points that are lower than typical for their age. They are cared for effectively and well prepared for Year 1.
- South Pennines Academies Trust has provided the much-needed structure, strong leadership and direction for the school. Its members are highly qualified and experienced. They have made astute recruitment decisions at all levels of the school.
- The local governing body provides strong oversight of the school. The school's vision and aims are kept front and foremost in all decision making. They hold leaders to account effectively.

## Full report

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

- Further improve the quality of writing across the school by ensuring that teachers:
  - consistently address pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar errors in all writing tasks
  - make sure that the quality of pupils' handwriting is consistently high
  - offer pupils more opportunities to write for a range of purposes across a wide range of subjects.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum even further by ensuring that there are more opportunities for pupils to deepen their thinking, knowledge and understanding, especially in subjects other than mathematics and English.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The quality of education was extremely low at the time when the Willowpark Primary Academy opened in 2016. The trust took swift action to implement clear and unequivocal systems and policies, which brought about much-needed structure and direction to the school. Inadequate leadership and teaching were eradicated by their astute recruitment of skilled staff, including senior leaders. As a result, staffing in the school has stabilised, pupils are now making good progress and teaching is effective. Parents and carers have regained trust in the school.
- Leaders and managers have high aspirations for all the pupils in the school. They have a strong moral drive to ensure that all pupils achieve their best and that disadvantage is not allowed to be a barrier to learning. Consequently, most pupils across the school are now making the progress they should from their individual starting points in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have tackled poor behaviour by implementing a strong and effective policy which emphasises nurture and positive behaviour techniques. This has resulted in a calm and purposeful learning environment and few incidents of unacceptable behaviour. While the attendance for some pupils remains a challenge, leaders work tirelessly to encourage and support families to send their children to school regularly. This work is improving attendance year on year.
- Government funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to support pupils' learning, personal development and enrichment opportunities. Monies are spent and the impact is evaluated carefully. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- The coordinator for pupils with SEND is skilled and effective. The needs of these pupils are identified early and the correct support is put in place. Allocated government funding is used successfully. The work of teaching assistants is monitored effectively, and their support makes a positive contribution to enabling these pupils to be fully involved in lessons.
- Teachers benefit from a wide variety of training and development opportunities. Nearly all leaders have undertaken leadership qualifications. Regular training sessions by subject leaders have ensured effective teaching strategies, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Weaker aspects of writing remain a focus for the school.
- Subject leaders have developed their skills and knowledge well by undertaking courses and collaborating with colleagues elsewhere in the trust. This has made them highly effective trainers and teachers. Newly qualified teachers are supported well by subject leaders and their skills are strengthening quickly.
- The school benefits from being part of a family of schools within the trust. Colleagues throughout the trust collaborate locally and this has further strengthened the school's assessments, curriculum and leadership.
- Leaders have strengthened the curriculum for a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Leaders have devised a precise sequence of learning for each subject in each year. This helps teachers to build on pupils' prior learning. The opportunities to deepen pupils' thinking in all subjects, however, are not consistently

strong. As a result, some pupils, especially in subjects other than mathematics and English, do not work at greater depth and this restricts their progress.

- The curriculum to support pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) and development is well thought out and relevant to the pupils in the school. Leaders have considered pupils' needs, including the local context and, in so doing, they provide pupils with interesting and helpful guidance to support their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. For example, pupils have developed their understanding of a range of cultures through visits to the Jewish museum and music and dance shows from around the world.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium is used well. The impact is evident in pupils' increased participation in sports groups at lunchtime and after school. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are active. The coordinator has made good links with Oldham Athletic Football Club, which has attracted funding and increased interest in football.
- The school has developed a strong support system to help integrate pupils who arrive mid-year and those who speak English as an additional language. The progress of these pupils is monitored closely. Where necessary, additional professional support is brought in, such as speech and language therapists. This has helped these pupils improve their communication skills and, by so doing, has helped them settle well and make good progress.
- Parents have regained trust in the leaders of the school. They are supportive of the teachers and work positively to support the progress of their children. Parents who completed the online survey, the school's own questionnaires and those who met with inspectors confirm their confidence in the improvements and leadership. Parents told inspectors that the school is unrecognisable from its predecessor. They felt that their concerns were heard and respected by the head of school and executive headteacher. Social media is used effectively by the school to keep parents informed about the school's activities.
- The trust has clear and focused lines of accountability. The members of the academy improvement board are highly experienced and effective. They have a sharp understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. When weaknesses are identified, swift action is taken. They use external reviews to good effect, as these help to sharpen their judgements. The trust has appointed a strong and effective executive headteacher, who has developed other leaders in the school successfully.

## **Governance of the school**

- The local academy board has a wide range of responsibilities. Governors keep good oversight of teaching, pupils' outcomes, the curriculum and government funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Governors demonstrate a high degree of moral purpose. They question leaders about the progress of different groups of pupils to ensure that no group is left behind. They have ensured that the pastoral programme is strong and effective to support pupils to learn and make progress.
- They have cultivated a close relationship with parents and the local community. They

have helped to improve the reputation of the school by engaging positively with all involved with the school.

- Governors check that what leaders are saying is accurate by visiting the school and speaking with staff and pupils. They scrutinise external reviews of the school. This allows them to ask probing questions and hold leaders to account.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are highly skilled in spotting and acting upon safeguarding concerns. They have developed effective systems to train staff and keep them abreast of new safeguarding information. Leaders are aware of the school's local safeguarding issues, such as gang-related crime. This information is used to check that pupils have the most relevant advice to keep themselves safe.
- Designated safeguarding leaders (DSLs) know their arrangements are effective because of the quality of reporting and referrals. They ask pupils regularly about their well-being and safety.
- Leaders have developed close relationships with parents. This, together with their good contacts with professional agencies to support families, has ensured that pupils' safety is monitored and supported effectively.
- Leaders have developed effective approaches to support pupils' mental health. These include effective programmes to help pupils talk about their feelings and negative emotions. Their achievement of the mental health and well-being silver award from an accredited external body is testament to their commitment to this aspect of pupils' development.
- Pupils, parents and staff agree that the school is a safe place and pupils are cared for effectively.

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

**Good**

- Major changes in staffing and effective training have significantly improved teaching and assessment across the school. Good teaching is now evident across classes and subjects. This has led to strong progress in most subjects.
- Teachers understand the gaps in pupils' learning and skills which are mainly due to weak teaching when they were younger. Their planning is therefore meticulous and their assessment of pupils' understanding is accurate.
- All teachers engender strong learning attitudes and behaviour. Pupils listen closely and follow instructions. They work extremely collaboratively with one another and share their ideas. Pupils respond to teachers' high expectations of their behaviour and try hard to sustain concentration.
- Teaching assistants are used to good effect. They are sensitive to pupils' needs and sensitively motivate less confident pupils. They help pupils who speak English as an additional language to access the classwork and settle well.
- Reading is taught successfully. Teachers use a consistent programme to teach phonics,

which has led to improved reading skills, especially in Reception and key stage 1. The school's reading strategy is effective. Teachers are skilled in helping pupils understand the reading texts they use in class. New vocabulary is explained and pupils gain a deep understanding of what they read.

- Teachers foster good reading habits by encouraging reading for pleasure every day. All pupils are heard to read to by an adult every day and this gives pupils confidence to improve.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective and strengthening. Teachers ensure that pupils' fluency in basic number facts and times tables are secure through regular testing and practice. Teachers make mathematics fun and relevant. Older, most able pupils relish opportunities to tackle complex problems.
- Teachers have strengthened their teaching of writing. Effective teaching has improved the quality and depth of pupils' writing. Teachers have used the expertise from professionals in another school to improve their skills and knowledge. Assessment of pupils' writing is now accurate. Regular checking of pupils' work indicates that spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting are not as strong as other aspects of their writing. This is because some teachers do not regularly pick up pupils' errors meticulously and do not reinforce handwriting expectations stringently enough. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in other subjects.
- Opportunities for some pupils to develop their creativity and flair are limited. This limits some pupils' attainment.
- Teachers have developed their knowledge and skills to teach a range of subjects as well as reading, writing and mathematics. For example, teachers reinforce pupils' scientific skills well and help pupils evaluate experiments, especially at key stage 2. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and this is reflected in pupils' good understanding of key individuals and events in history. Pupils benefit from expert tuition from specialist teachers for French, music and sport. Teachers follow the guidance of the curriculum when teaching subjects in the wider curriculum. The planned sequence of learning helps teachers to build on prior learning and avoid repetition. However, the curriculum does not include enough opportunities for pupils to learn at a greater depth. Consequently, at times, teachers do not challenge and encourage pupils to think more deeply about the themes and concepts they are taught.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils demonstrate the 'Willowpark Way' by being 'respectful, responsible and safe'. Pupils work happily with each other in class. They are polite and well-mannered. Often, pupils held doors open for inspectors and let them pass through corridors before them during the inspection.
- Pupils study other cultures and faiths and learn about tolerance and respect for others during their religious education and PSHE lessons. Pupils have visited a Jewish museum

and have hosted a visit from pupils from a school in the trust with pupils who practice the Islamic faith.

- Pupils are supported well to manage their emotional and mental well-being. Staff have been trained to understand techniques to reduce stress and pupils report that these are very useful.
- Pupils are encouraged to keep physically healthy. Younger pupils, for example, participate in the 'daily mile' run. This is reported to have benefited many pupils' focus and concentration.
- Enrichment weeks further develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of themselves, others and the world around them. Pupils enjoy their outdoor learning programmes. As a result, they are much more aware of their environment. Pupils learn about the importance of recycling and the impact of climate change.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep safe, especially online. Older pupils understand the risks of using their devices, including gaming tools. They understand how to keep their identity private. Cyber bullying is rare.
- Very few bullying incidents have been reported. This marks a significant improvement from the early days since the school opened. On the rare occasions that pupils make racist or homophobic comments, staff deal with this seriously.
- Parents told inspectors that pupils in the school are highly respectful of difference. They praise teachers for encouraging pupils to respect all types of relationships and families.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is sensible and orderly.
- The rate of poor behaviour incidents, including fixed-term exclusions, has reduced significantly. The new behaviour policy is simple but effective. Staff use the steps to modify behaviour effectively. Pupils' needs are understood and any potential incidents are often nipped in the bud.
- Pupils with challenging behaviour are provided with one-to-one support. This has greatly reduced repetition of anti-social behaviour. The school admits a number of pupils mid-year from other schools. Mostly, these pupils settle well because of the calm and purposeful environment and sensitive support they receive.
- Inspectors did not witness any low-level disruption in class. Pupils report that they can get on with their work in class because everyone gets on with each other.
- Parents, staff and pupils agree that behaviour is good because it is managed successfully.
- The attendance of pupils to school is improving quickly. However, one of the greatest challenges the school faces is improving the attendance of a small proportion of pupils who are persistently absent. Staff do everything they can to support and meet the needs all of those who have difficult and complex challenges to their lives. The work to support these families has already improved some pupils' attendance. The recruitment

of the attendance officer is making a positive difference. A wide range of strategies is used by leaders and attendance continues to be strengthened year on year.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Good

- Since the school opened, pupils' attainment at key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has been below average. This is because of the significant gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills previously and their very low starting points. Due to improved teaching, current pupils' attainment is rapidly improving in most year groups. More pupils than ever before are reaching higher standards.
- The results of national assessments in 2018 showed that pupils achieved average progress in reading and writing but progress was well below average in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. The significant improvements now seen in the school show that the tide is turning. School assessment data and a review of pupils' work show that current pupils are making much better progress.
- Pupils' progress in reading is particularly strong due to the effective teaching of reading strategies. Pupils make good progress in writing. They write with growing confidence to express their ideas or record their findings in other subjects. Their skills are strengthening quickly in each year. Despite these improvements, weaker aspects remain in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Many more pupils are reaching age-related standards than ever before.
- Progress in mathematics is good. Pupils are becoming much more fluent in mathematics, especially at key stage 2. Pupils practise their skills and knowledge frequently, including for homework. This has meant that most pupils are able to tackle problems and explain their reasoning confidently. The proportion of pupils now reaching age-related and above expectations in each year group is increasing quickly.
- The trend of poor performance at the end of key stage 1 has been reversed. Currently, the proportions of pupils reaching age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics are close to national averages. From the point that they started school, this represents good progress.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the phonics standard at the end of Year 1 is close to the national average. The vast majority of those who did not meet the standard catch up by the end of Year 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. This is because of the close monitoring and attention to their individual needs. In some year groups, these pupils make better progress than other pupils because of the additional support they receive.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress. This marks a significant improvement from the poor outcomes when the school started. These pupils are supported sensitively and provided with appropriate professional guidance.
- Pupils are improving their knowledge in a range of subjects, as well as in English and mathematics. Many pupils reach the standards for their age and make good progress. However, teachers do not consistently offer pupils opportunities to achieve greater depth in these subjects. This restricts some pupils from making the progress of which they are capable.



- Pupils who are new to the school in key stages 1 and 2 settle in well and make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. In almost all year groups, these pupils attain as well or better than others. Pupils are prepared effectively for the next stage of their education.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Leadership of the early years is strong and ensures that children get off to a good start. Most children make good progress from starting points that are lower than those typical for their age. Each child's needs are identified promptly and their progress is monitored carefully. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is increasing, which ensures their readiness for Year 1.
- There are high-quality resources and children enjoy a positive learning experience, accessing a broad range of opportunities. The opportunities for children to learn and improve their skills have been well thought out, particularly in the outdoor learning environment.
- The quality of teaching is good. There is a high focus on developing communication and language skills. Adults effectively role model their speaking expectations by talking precisely to children. As a result, children mimic these speaking skills and improve their communication. Children who speak English as an additional language benefit from this focus and make good progress.
- Children are taught basic skills effectively. Learning phonics is an enjoyable experience for children. The majority of children are beginning to use their phonics knowledge when reading and they are starting to use their knowledge of letters and sound in their early writing. Children enjoy their number work. This is taught in a fun and interesting way, including using the outdoor resources imaginatively.
- Staff are trained well to provide support for children with specific learning difficulties. The speech and language therapy programme, for example, has made a positive difference to the progress of many children.
- Children play happily with one another. They are encouraged to listen closely and this has improved their concentration. Behaviour is well managed.
- Children are safe and cared for effectively.
- Parents are highly positive about the provision. They value the good communication from leaders and staff and the advice offered to help their children.

## School details

Unique reference number	144507
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10087797

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	251
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dr Phil Wheeliker
Principal	Mrs Alison Black
Telephone number	0161 359 5699
Website	<a href="http://www.willowparkacademy.org">www.willowparkacademy.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@willowparkacademy.org">info@willowparkacademy.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2016 under new sponsorship from South Pennines Academies Trust. Its predecessor school was Stoneleigh Academy.
- The school is an averaged-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. The proportion of pupils eligible for an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The number of pupils starting and leaving at different times through the year is increasing year on year.
- The school is led by an executive headteacher, who also oversees another school in the trust, and a head of school. The coordinator for pupils with SEND and the DSL shares

her responsibilities between two schools.

- The school runs a breakfast club.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors evaluated the quality of teaching and learning in all years. This included observing lessons and examining pupils' workbooks in most subjects.
- Inspectors met with all leaders, including those who lead English, mathematics and science, the coordinator for the provision for pupils with SEND, the sport and PE coordinator and the pupil premium leader. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and the chair of the standards and curriculum committee. The lead inspector spoke with the chief executive officer of the academy improvement board. An inspector spoke with the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 86 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and three to the free-text facility, as well as the 22 responses to the staff survey and seven to the free-text facility. Twenty-six pupils responded to the online survey. Inspectors spoke with some parents before school and took account of surveys carried out by the school during the inspection. Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils and heard some read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, behaviour logs, safeguarding records, performance information, external reviews and school policies.

## Inspection team

Zarina Connolly, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Joyce	Ofsted Inspector
Schelene Ferris	Ofsted Inspector

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