

Inspection of a good school: The Wilmslow Academy

Handforth Road, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 2LX

Inspection dates:

11–12 September 2019

Outcome

The Wilmslow Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and cared for because adults in the school are friendly and approachable. There is always someone to talk to if they have any worries. Pupils enjoy playing with their friends. Playtimes are calm and well supervised. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They say behaviour is good and that bullying is rare. Should bullying happen, it is resolved quickly.

Pupils work hard in lessons and conduct themselves well in school. They treat each other with respect. Staff have high expectations for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils have positions of responsibility, for example as members of the school council and as e-safety officers. This contributes to their preparation for the future.

The school has strong links to the community, with events such as the Sunday morning park run. Pupils can join a wide range of clubs, for example bell ringing, choir, garden club and sports clubs. Older pupils enjoy the chance to overcome new challenges during residential trips. Pupils are proud of their school. They try hard to live up to the school's values of friendship, respect, excellence and determination.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are well aware that, until recently, the curriculum for some subjects has not been designed as coherently as it is for reading, writing and mathematics. They have taken effective action to ensure that the renewed curriculum plans identify the knowledge that they want pupils to know at certain points in their schooling. The plans clearly show the order that information is to be taught. While these plans are in place for most subjects, it is too early to see the difference they are making to pupils' achievement. That said, pupils approve of this new approach. They particularly like the fact that subjects are no longer 'jumbled up' as they were before.

Teachers work with other colleagues in the Aspire Educational Trust to share ideas and

expertise. Teachers use assessment information effectively to identify any gaps in pupils' understanding, especially in reading and mathematics. Teachers give pupils the help that they need to catch up quickly. Disruption in lessons is rare because activities match pupils' needs well. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with the national average. Teachers are improving the way that they check what pupils know and remember in different subjects; however, these strategies are not fully in place.

In mathematics, pupils in key stage 1 confidently use practical resources to investigate numbers. Older pupils explained to me how the work in Year 3 helps them to tackle more challenging work in Year 5.

Teachers plan learning that builds sequentially on pupils' prior knowledge. They use questions effectively to encourage pupils to think back to what they already know. In geography, key stage 2 pupils use their knowledge of Wilmslow to identify key areas for their research on Brazil, for example transport, religion, climate and vegetation.

Leaders foster a love of reading in pupils and staff. The teaching of reading has the highest priority in school. Pupils enjoy listening to stories. They talk with enthusiasm about the books that they have read. They are eager to recommend books to each other. Pupils in Year 6 say they especially enjoy the times when everyone, including the adults, have the chance to read for pleasure.

As soon as children join the Reception class they begin to learn letter sounds. They quickly learn to read simple words and sentences. The books they read match the sounds that they are learning. Teachers help children and pupils to catch up if they begin to fall behind. Most pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils read with accuracy and fluency. They understand what they are reading. Pupils' increasing vocabulary enables them to access books, often non-fiction, to support their learning in a broad range of subjects. Pupils are competent readers.

In the Reception class, leaders focus on developing children's early mathematics, language and communication skills. Children practise their new knowledge in well-resourced classrooms and in the outdoor area. Children quickly make friends and chat happily to each other in a calm, nurturing environment. Most children reach a good level of development by the end of the early years. They are prepared well for Year 1.

Pupils with SEND access the full curriculum. Teachers use external support well, for example guidance from the speech and language therapists, to ensure that they meet pupils' individual needs. As a result, pupils with SEND are successful and thrive.

Leaders enhance pupils' learning through many trips outside of the local community. For example, pupils visit museums to study artefacts as part of their work in history. Pupils talked enthusiastically about performing with pupils from other schools at The Big Sing. They are equally proud of their success in local sporting competitions.

Governors, and members of the trust, are ambitious for all pupils and hold leaders to account to ensure high standards are maintained.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Checks are in place to ensure that adults in school are suitable to work with children. All records relating to safeguarding are maintained meticulously. Leaders work together with the local authority and other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. They ensure that vulnerable pupils get the help that they need quickly. Staff are able to spot potential signs of abuse or neglect because of the effective training they receive. Staff receive weekly updates on any potential areas of risk for the pupils in the locality. They are vigilant and know what to do if they think a pupil may be at risk.

A variety of organisations visit the school to help educate pupils about the risks that they may face. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when they are using the internet, and when they are out and about in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The changes that leaders have made to the way that subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics are taught are very recent. Leaders need to embed the curriculum plans for each subject to ensure that pupils are able to build on knowledge as they move throughout the school.
- Strategies to check that pupils are knowing more and remembering more in other curriculum subjects are not fully in place. Teachers need to check how well pupils achieve in different subjects so that they are able to adapt their curriculum planning and teaching sequences accordingly to enable all pupils to achieve the school's ambitious curriculum goals.
- The improvements leaders have made to the design and implementation of the curriculum for subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics are not fully embedded. It is for this reason that the transition statements have been applied when confirming that the school remains good.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Dean Oaks Primary School, to be good on 9 May 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	143156
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10110968
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	336
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the Trust	Sue Bowen
Principal	Charlotte Clowes
Website	www.thewilmslowacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Wilmslow Academy opened in October 2016 as part of the Aspire Educational Trust. This is the first inspection of the school since it became an academy.
- The local governors committee reports to the board of trustees termly. Areas of responsibility for governance are clearly defined and understood.
- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding is slightly below average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive SEND support is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by an education, health and care (EHC) plan is average.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, I spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I spoke with members of the local governing body, the deputy chief executive officer, the principal and members of staff. I reviewed a range of documentation including documentation about attendance, safeguarding and checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- I considered the 71 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 22 responses from the online staff survey. There were no responses to the pupils' survey.
- I carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics and geography. Deep dives are the methodology by which inspectors identify why a subject is as it is. This entails: discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of children's work, discussions with teachers, discussions with children and listening to children read.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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