

Inspection of The Willows Primary School

Downing Close, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 9ER

Inspection dates: 29–30 January 2020

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being at this school. Most attend well and are keen to learn. Staff expect pupils to behave well at all times. This includes children new to Reception, who adjust quickly to new routines. Pupils and staff like and follow the new behaviour system. Pupils work hard and respond quickly to teachers. Pupils show respect to teachers, visitors and each other. They learn in a safe environment. Pupils get on well together at break and lunchtimes. Bullying is rare, but pupils know what to do if they have concerns. Pupils are confident that teachers will deal with situations immediately.

In the early years and key stage 1, teachers have high expectations of what pupils should be able to do in reading, writing and mathematics. While the quality of education is improving, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are having to work hard to make up for gaps because of previous weaker or disrupted teaching. They, and parents, told inspectors that the school is much better than it was 18 months ago.

Pupils have many opportunities to take part in a range of activities and exciting educational trips such as the one to see 'The Lion King' in London.

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

Leaders have worked hard and effectively over the last four terms to dramatically improve provision. There has been significant training to improve the general approach to teaching. Subject training has focused on planning and learning the content of some subjects rather than how to teach them. Subject leaders are given time to carry out their roles, but it is too soon to see the impact beyond English and mathematics.

When the school joined the Orwell Multi-Academy Trust, the new leadership team identified that pupils' poor skills in reading were a barrier to learning. Leaders prioritised reading, which is now taught well. Staff teach phonics effectively and consistently. Pupils are developing a love of reading. The school is working to increase parents' involvement with reading. Last year, leaders focused on basic reading, writing and mathematics. The quality of education in these subjects is much stronger than in other subjects. Leaders have turned their attention to bringing about improvements in how learning in other subjects is planned and delivered.

Leaders have thought carefully about the order in which knowledge is taught in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have made sure teachers have the skills and knowledge to teach these subjects well. As a result, pupils' work is improving. This is also the case in other subjects where staff follow a clear programme such as personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and music. However, the same cannot be said of several other subjects. Leaders' plans to put this right are at an early stage.

From the time children start in Nursery, there is a clear sequence of learning through the early years. The early years is providing a secure foundation for the next stage of the children's education. Training has been provided to all staff so that, for example, the approach to teaching phonics is consistent.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) now have their needs identified and met well in English and mathematics. Teaching assistants have been trained well to support learning. As a result, the attendance and behaviour of pupils with SEND has improved.

The school works very well to enhance pupils' personal development and raise the aspirations of pupils. For example, through activities such as the world of work event for Year 5 or the use of costumes in Year 2, pupils develop an understanding of employment.

Exciting trips and visits bring the curriculum alive and expand pupils' knowledge of the world. The religious education and PSHE programmes deepen pupils' understanding of and respect for people's differing backgrounds and faiths. Understanding of fundamental values such as democracy is developed from the early years. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop musical skills. For example, all Year 4 pupils learn to play a cornet or baritone and receive expert tuition. Pupils boost their confidence and speaking skills through the rich range of opportunities in drama and music.

Pupils have responded admirably to adults' raised expectations of how they should behave. Pupils display resilience and positivity in their learning in many classes. Pupils' attendance and punctuality were previously poor. There is now a robust approach to absence and punctuality. The breakfast club and the school's work with families has led to attendance that has improved to much nearer the national average.

The leaders of the trust and those responsible for the governance of the school have provided school leaders with a lot of support and regular challenge. The school makes effective use of a wide range of support from other schools in the trust and the local cluster, the local authority and an education consultant. Support for families is exceptional. The school helps family members to gain qualifications to help them into employment. Parents told us how they value the many opportunities that now exist to come into the school such as for coffee mornings.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All the requirements for pre-employment checks are met. Staff are suitably trained and know what to do if they have concerns about pupils' welfare.

There are highly organised systems to check that pupils are kept safe and to follow up any referrals to external agencies.

There are regular checks from people outside the school to make sure that leaders are doing the right things.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There has been a dramatic improvement in the quality of provision, especially in reading and mathematics. However, there are gaps in knowledge and understanding for older pupils. These result from a legacy of poor provision. Therefore, without overburdening teachers or overloading pupils' memory, leaders should ensure that the gaps that still exist in older pupils' learning are filled.
- Faced with the challenges of low standards, especially in reading, leaders pared back the curriculum. All national curriculum subjects are now planned for, but the implementation and impact of the curriculum, particularly the teaching of the curriculum, are much stronger in English and mathematics than in other subjects. Leaders should ensure through rigorous checking that there is effective teaching across the full curriculum.
- The attitudes and conduct of the overwhelming majority of pupils are strengths of the school. Pupils' attendance has been low, but has improved through the actions of leaders and other staff. Leaders should build on this effective work to raise attendance, so it improves further.

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 the school and 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	144216
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10121403
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	373
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the trustees	Roger Fern
Headteacher	Paul Arch
Website	http://www.willowsprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Orwell Multi-Academy Trust upon its establishment in April 2017.
- The current headteacher has been in post since September 2018. At that time a new senior leadership team joined the school, along with 10 new teachers.
- Before the appointment of the current team, there were frequent changes of headteachers.
- The school uses St Christopher's pupil referral unit in Ipswich to provide alternative provision for one pupil.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders, groups of teachers, pupils and parents. We also met with the chief executive officer and members of the board of trustees and local governing committee. We had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

- We started the inspection on the first day by carrying out deep dives on reading, mathematics, geography, science and writing. This involved discussions with curriculum leaders, visits to a series of lessons with school leaders, discussions with pupils, discussions with teachers, work scrutiny undertaken with school leaders and the review of relevant documentation.
- On the second day we undertook further discussions with school and trust staff, additional visits to lessons and an assembly, and analysed 50 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View and 27 responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- We inspected safeguarding through scrutiny of the school’s single central record of recruitment, discussion with the designated safeguarding lead, and discussion with other staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Adrian Lyons, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Ahson Mohammed

Ofsted Inspector

Russell Ayling

Ofsted Inspector

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 <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020