

Inspection of a good school: Wilcombe Primary School

Lazenby Road, Wilcombe, Tiverton, Devon EX16 4AL

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 July 2021

Outcome

Wilcombe Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Parents and carers say that when their children go to school, it is like being part of a big family. Staff agree wholeheartedly. All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, benefit from the same opportunities. Older pupils look forward to their residential trip to London. When staff take pupils out on visits, they are proud of the respectful way pupils conduct themselves.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Bullying is unusual. The school supports pupils effectively with any social or emotional difficulties. For example, there is a well-used 'nurture centre' where pupils go to talk about their feelings. Staff describe the school as a 'well-oiled machine' where pupils' needs are understood.

The school provides an inspiring environment for pupils to learn in. Pupils' learning in different curriculum subjects is celebrated in striking displays. Leaders arrange exhibitions of pupils' work, such as a project on castles. These are attended by parents and governors. Everyone is proud of the work pupils do.

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

The headteacher is keen to nurture the aspirations of the whole school community. He wants pupils to understand how education can open doors for them in the future. The school's motto is 'learning for life'. Staff model this well. Many teaching assistants complete teaching qualifications, with the support of school and trust leaders. In addition, teachers develop their leadership skills. There is a culture of staff development in the school which offers a good example to pupils.

Leaders rightly consider reading to be the backbone of the school's curriculum. Staff involved in the teaching of early reading are well trained. As a result, pupils benefit from a

consistent approach to phonics as they progress through the school. Staff take great care to ensure that pupils read books that are matched to the phonics they have learned. This helps pupils to build their confidence and fluency.

Children in the early years make a strong start to their reading. However, some pupils in Year 1 have fallen behind, due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Leaders ensure that these pupils have extra phonics teaching daily. Individual pupils receive further support, based on their personal targets. Consequently, the majority of Year 1 pupils are making up lost ground and will be ready for Year 2.

There is a carefully planned sequence of learning for pupils to follow in mathematics. The teaching of mathematics has improved, thanks to the training provided by school leaders, including those from the trust. Skilled staff build pupils' knowledge and fluency with number, starting in the early years. As pupils become older, they enjoy mathematics. Teachers mostly use assessment well to identify what pupils do not know, and address this. However, pupils report that sometimes they complete work which includes mathematical ideas they have not yet learned. When this happens, they feel less successful.

Trust leaders are passionate about the value of a curriculum which links ideas together. When this works well, pupils develop a rich knowledge which lends certainty to their discussions. For example, pupils in Year 3 know a great deal about Roman history and mythology. However, leaders have not agreed what pupils must learn in every subject. Therefore, in some subjects, this relies on individual teachers making choices about what curriculum content to emphasise. Moreover, some teachers design assessments and tasks for pupils without being clear about the focus. Consequently, pupils become confused.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works closely with early years staff to identify pupils' needs from the outset. There is a systematic approach to assessing pupils' speech, language and communication. Pupils who need support in this area receive it. The SENCo works closely with parents of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. For example, some pupils receive extra help to keep themselves safe near roads.

Leaders set out to make a difference to pupils' lives beyond the academic curriculum. Through the 'Wilcombe Wobbler', an annual cross-country fun run, the school encourages pupils and families to get involved in sport. Pupils visit London each year to learn about life and culture in a modern British city. Leaders are always thinking of ways to get more pupils involved in after-school clubs. They offer an imaginative range, such as indoor curling and therapeutic sessions at a donkey sanctuary.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has played an important part in supporting vulnerable pupils and their families during periods of national restrictions. Leaders make every effort to be approachable to parents. They arrange help quickly for families who need it.

Teachers have regular training which keeps them up to date with local safeguarding risks. They are alert to signs of neglect or exploitation. Leaders work closely with other agencies to support pupils at risk of harm. They are tenacious in ensuring that action is taken to reduce risks and safeguard pupils.

Leaders use the school's curriculum to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, for example when playing games online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn is not clear to teachers. As a result, teachers do not check that pupils know and remember essential curriculum content. Leaders must agree the key knowledge that they expect pupils to remember, across the whole curriculum.

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 or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 school to be good in May 2016.

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 information from Parent View 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 [here](#).

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	137659
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10198439
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	176
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Hugh Whittaker
Headteacher	Reg Gilbert
Website	http://www.wilcombe-pri.devon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous section 5 inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership of the school. The current headteacher joined the school in 2017. Several curriculum leaders have been appointed in recent years.
- The school has provision for three-year-olds. This is based in an adjoining classroom to that of the Reception Year. Pupils across the early years foundation stage share indoor and outdoor spaces. A team of staff works across the early years phase.
- The number of pupils with education, health and care plans is higher than average.
- The school shares a site with a privately-run nursery and a children's centre.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken this into account in the evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, two leaders from the multi-academy trust and the chair of the local governing body. In addition, the inspector held meetings with the SENCo and senior leaders responsible for early years provision and the curriculum.
- Deep dives were carried out in reading, mathematics and history. This included meetings with curriculum leaders and teachers, visits to lessons, discussions with pupils and consideration of pupils' work.
- In order to consider the school's work to safeguard pupils, the inspector scrutinised the single central record of adults working within the school. Discussions were held with the designated safeguarding lead, trust leaders, school staff and pupils.
- The inspector took into account 18 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 14 free-text responses, and 25 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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