

Inspection of Willand School

Gables Road, Willand, Cullompton, Devon EX15 2QL

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2021

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Willand pupils enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. They say that bullying is rare. Pupils have confidence in the staff to look after them. The environment is calm and orderly. Pupils and staff show respect for one another.

Children in the Reception Year get off to a great start. Children settle quickly and follow teachers' instructions very well. Beyond the early years, leaders' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not as high. This is reflected in the curriculum pupils follow. As a result, pupils do not progress well in some subjects.

Pupils' behaviour is good. Most are well mannered and polite. Occasionally, however, when the curriculum does not meet pupils' needs, some pupils lose concentration and their attitudes to learning slip.

Leaders' vision for pupils to become 'successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens' is shared by staff. Pupils feel proud to represent their school in sports competitions, festivals and as members of the school council. Leaders' work with 'parents as partners' means that the school ethos reflects a strong sense of community.

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

There are weaknesses in the curriculum that means some pupils are not receiving a good quality of education. The reading curriculum is not supporting pupils who are at the early stages of reading and writing. Staff do not deliver the school's reading programme confidently and consistently. Some staff do not yet have the knowledge and skills they need to teach reading. Pupils who need to catch up do not receive the support they need to read fluently and spell accurately. Consequently, they are falling further behind.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) identifies pupils' additional needs well. However, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not benefit from a curriculum that is tailored to their individual needs. Teachers do not use the important information contained in pupils' individual plans to break learning down into the small steps that are sometimes required. Consequently, these pupils find the curriculum too difficult and switch off.

In some subjects, such as art and design and computing, leaders have not considered how best to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers do not make suitable checks on what pupils already know and understand. Pupils enjoy talking about the activities they have completed in the wider curriculum. However, they remember what they did rather than what they learned. Important concepts are not sticking.

The mathematics curriculum is effective. Pupils enjoy mathematics and most pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. They use their number

knowledge confidently and use mathematics vocabulary well to explain their thinking.

The early years leader is implementing an ambitious curriculum. She has prioritised developing children's communication and language so that they start Year 1 with a wide range of vocabulary. Children learn to read books that are matched to their ability as soon as they start school. They are enthusiastic about their learning. Children enjoy learning rhymes, poetry and singing songs.

Pupils' experience of world faiths is enriched by educational visits, such as to Exeter mosque and the local church. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, such as law, debate, and democracy. This is brought to life by visiting the Houses of Parliament in London. The wider curriculum helps pupils to make informed choices about being healthy and staying safe.

Pupils know how to behave well. Even though they have just started school, children in the early years follow instructions and get on well with each other. Older pupils' learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

Governors are aware of the strengths of the school. They are rightly proud of the way that leaders supported pupils and families when the school was only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions. Governors know the shortcomings of the school, including the weaknesses in the curriculum. However, they have not yet taken sufficient action to ensure the curriculum is improved in all subjects. Governors meet their statutory duties. They place a high priority on staff well-being. Staff appreciate this care and attention.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Systems and processes for staff recruitment are fit for purpose. Training and induction for staff are effective. Consequently, staff know what to do to keep pupils safe and follow the school's policy to report, record or escalate any concerns. Leaders, including governors, have a secure understanding of pupils' vulnerabilities. Leaders work effectively with a wide range of external agencies to support pupils and their families.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not prioritised the reading curriculum well enough. Pupils with gaps in their knowledge struggle to catch up. In part, this is because older pupils, who remain at the early stages of reading, do not read books that interest them. This means that they do not enjoy reading as much as they could. Furthermore, teachers do not check that pupils in key stage 1 can read texts accurately.

Leaders must ensure that teachers support pupils to read suitable books, check pupils' reading progress and match curriculum learning accordingly.

- The planning of the school's phonics programme is appropriate, but the implementation in key stages 1 and 2 is inconsistent. Some staff have not had the training they need to implement the reading programme. They do not have the subject knowledge or pedagogical understanding that they need to adapt the scheme to meet the needs of the weakest readers. Leaders must ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have the training and support that they need to teach reading well.
- Beyond the early years, pupils' spelling is weak. Teachers do not equip pupils with the important knowledge and skills needed to spell accurately, such as spelling patterns and rules. This means that pupils go through school with a growing number of misconceptions in their spelling. Leaders need to assure themselves that there is a high-quality writing curriculum in place so that pupils learn to spell correctly.
- Leaders' approach to assessment in some subjects is inconsistent. Teachers do not make appropriate and timely checks on what pupils have learned in some subjects. This means that teachers do not know precisely what knowledge and skills pupils have remembered. Leaders need to ensure teachers improve their use of assessment, and use the insights they gain, to plan a curriculum that closes the gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of some pupils with SEND. There is a mismatch between the next steps recorded in pupils' individual plans and the actual subject content taught. Some pupils do not have the resources they need. This means that, sometimes, they find the curriculum too difficult. Leaders must ensure that teachers use all the information they have to put in place a curriculum that meets pupils' precise needs.

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 Ofsted 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.

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	113114
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10199303
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Carswell
Headteacher	Anne Hawkins
Website	www.willand.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 October 2006, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been significant improvements to the school building since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors did deep dives in early reading, mathematics, art and design, and geography. This included discussions with subject leaders, lesson visits, looking at examples of work, discussions with teachers, discussions with pupils and listening to pupils read to an adult. An inspector considered some aspects of the computing curriculum.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, curriculum leaders, the SENCo, staff and governors, including the chair of the governing body.

- The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a local authority adviser.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, minutes from governor meetings and documentation relating to attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors examined safeguarding records, checked staff's safeguarding knowledge and spoke with pupils. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors considered 93 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 66 free-text comments. They took into consideration 45 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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