

Inspection of a good school: Willowfield School

209 Blackhorse Road, Walthamstow, London E17 6ND

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2021

Outcome

Willowfield School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their education at Willowfield School. They said that they feel safe at school because teachers look after them. For example, staff are always at the school gates at the end of the day to make sure that pupils leave the premises safely. Pupils behave well. Lessons are rarely disrupted by silly or rude behaviour. Pupils know what is expected and follow the school's rules. They move around the school calmly and sensibly. The building is clean, tidy and well-kept, a testament to the pride pupils take in their school.

For the most part, pupils do well at school. They are given work that helps them to learn and be successful in later life. Sometimes, however, the well-designed curriculum is not used effectively to help pupils learn. From time to time, pupils are unclear about what they are doing in class and why. They become distracted and do not learn as well as they should.

Pupils' well-being is a top priority for leaders. Staff recognise when pupils may need extra support and react quickly to give the right help. Pupils said that the school deals well with bullying. Although bullying is rare, they say that when it does happen, it is sorted out quickly. Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe online. They consider questions about knife crime, sexual harassment and racism in citizenship and ethics lessons.

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

Leaders have moved the school forward since the previous inspection. Subject leaders have reviewed and revised their plans to better identify what they want pupils to learn. These plans place emphasis on ensuring that pupils build their knowledge step by step. This means that pupils learn the basics before moving on to more complex ideas. For example, in science, the revised plans build pupils' scientific knowledge so that they can make connections between different concepts. In music, leaders use research about music education to craft a curriculum that helps pupils deepen their knowledge and skills over time. Pupils learn how to make music and the technical elements that they need in

order to make progress. As they get older, pupils revisit these elements in more detail. This helps to reinforce learning so that it sticks.

Subject plans are nearly always put into practice in the classroom effectively. In music and religious education, pupils have a first-class experience. They progress significantly with their learning and make thoughtful contributions in class. In mathematics, pupils build their knowledge over time to become fluent in using numbers. In many lessons, reading and literacy skills are explicit and pupils are encouraged to read out loud to the whole class.

Occasionally, these features are not as strong. Teachers are specialists in their subjects, but do not always have the same expertise in translating the well-planned curriculum into practice. Sometimes, lessons fail to engage pupils sufficiently in learning. Pupils are unclear about the purpose of the work or where the learning is going. These small variations mean that learning stalls for some pupils.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9. This is broadened further by after-school activities, visits, trips and themed weeks. Pupils welcome the range of after-school clubs including those for sports, chess and music. Ethics and citizenship lessons and assemblies teach pupils about the wider world, for example how government works, mental health and eating healthily. Pupils have opportunities to contribute to the life of the school through the ambassadors' programme. The careers education programme is comprehensive and provides pupils with independent advice about the next steps in their lives. These opportunities add to pupils' broader learning well.

The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Most pupils make appropriate progress with their learning. Often, the support provided by teaching assistants helps pupils to understand the work. At other times, teachers adapt the work for pupils with SEND, for example in geography.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety are dealt with effectively. Leaders often go the extra mile to make sure that vulnerable pupils benefit from the opportunities provided by the school. Procedures for identifying safeguarding concerns are clear-cut, so that issues are dealt with swiftly. This includes the strong links with outside agencies such as local authority social services and the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS). The vetting checks to ensure the suitability of staff and governors are secure. Staff training is up to date, included the new statutory safeguarding guidance. Staff are knowledgeable about what to look out for and how to report any concerns.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe online. They learn about the risks such as sexual harassment and racism, as well as how to avoid the negative effects of social media. Pupils in Year 11 said that they had created presentations on topics such as sexual harassment, racism and mental health to raise the awareness of younger pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Much has been done to review and revise the curriculum. As a result, subjects are planned well. They are carefully sequenced and identify the components that pupils need to learn to reach clear end-points. However, in some cases, these plans are not implemented as effectively, and pupils' learning suffers. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have the expertise and training to translate the planned curriculum successfully into classroom practice across the school.

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, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2012.

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	103100
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10195732
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	906
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elizabeth Rutherford
Headteacher	Clive Rosewell
Website	www.willowfield-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Willowfield School moved to its current purpose-built premises six years ago.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils, the chair of the governing body and other governors. Inspectors also spoke with three parents who requested a phone call.
- Meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors scrutinised school records of the safeguarding checks made on adults working in the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, religious education and music. In each of these subjects, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work and where possible met with teaching staff to talk about their approach to the curriculum.
- Inspectors considered 57 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey. There were no responses to the pupil and staff surveys.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils to discuss their views about many different aspects of their school, including safeguarding.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Bruce Goddard

Ofsted Inspector

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