

Inspection of an outstanding school: Willow Grove Primary School

Willow Grove, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan, Greater Manchester WN4 8XF

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 November 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils said that they enjoy coming to Willow Grove. They told inspectors that staff make learning interesting. They also said that they feel safe at school, and know that staff care about them.

Pupils understand what bullying is. They are confident that should it occur, it would be dealt with quickly. If there is any falling out among friends, adults help pupils to resolve their differences.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about what the school offers their child. A typical written comment was: 'Willow Grove has given our child their education back and brought our family back together.'

Pupils take their responsibilities as members of committees very seriously. Those in the school council were eager to discuss biodiversity and their work to bring a beehive into the school grounds. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, pupils enjoyed a wide range of clubs and activities. These broadened pupils' experiences and helped to build their confidence. Leaders plan to reintroduce these soon.

Leaders, staff and governors have high expectations of pupils. However, these expectations are not fully realised in some subjects, because some staff have not had enough support to develop their subject knowledge in order to deliver the curriculum.

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

All pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are ambitious for every pupil. Consequently, they have designed a broad and balanced curriculum which meets pupils' needs and allows them to achieve well. The curriculum sets out what pupils must know and remember in each subject at key points in time, and

is carefully sequenced across both key stages. Senior leaders provide a comprehensive programme of training to support the leadership of different subjects. This allows most subject leaders to carefully consider the knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn. Subject leaders are enthusiastic about their role. However, some are new to their post. These leaders have not had an opportunity to check how well pupils know and remember the curriculum.

Along with teachers, leaders are skilled at identifying and understanding the needs of pupils. For example, the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum has been developed specifically to address the particular learning, social and emotional needs of pupils. Leaders give high priority to meeting these needs in line with the ethos of the school. Staff are adept at supporting pupils who have previously experienced trauma.

Pupils build on what they already know. For example, pupils use their knowledge of balance and counterbalance to help them when developing new techniques in gymnastics. Staff use assessment information well to identify any gaps in pupils' learning and to plan what pupils need to learn next. This provides a secure foundation of knowledge for the next stage in pupils' education.

Most staff deliver the curriculum with confidence. However, in some cases, the staff's subject knowledge is not well developed. This is especially true for a minority of staff who are new to the school. They have not received subject-specific training. This means that they are not able to deliver a minority of curriculum plans. This hinders pupils from knowing and remembering more over time.

Many pupils have gaps in their reading skills when they join the school. Therefore, leaders have made reading a high priority. A systematic approach to the teaching of phonics is in place. Pupils develop skills to read new words using their phonics knowledge. The books that they read match the sounds they know. This helps pupils with their fluency and accuracy when reading.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They take pride in completing their work. Pupils told inspectors that any disruptions in lessons are dealt with swiftly.

Pupils learn to respect different cultures and religions through lessons, visits, visitors and assemblies. They particularly value the residential trips that develop teamwork and resilience. They respond well to the consistent routines of the school. The atmosphere in school is calm and productive. This helps pupils to behave well, work hard and concentrate in lessons.

Governors take their responsibilities seriously and carry out their roles effectively. They have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness, and provide challenge and support for leaders. Staff said that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that PSHE or mathematics may usefully serve as a focus for deep dives in the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils know that adults will listen to them if they are worried or concerned about anything. Pupils learn about safety through the curriculum. For example, they learn how to use the internet safely.

Staff receive frequent training in safeguarding. They are alert to possible signs of abuse or neglect, and report these promptly. The school's safeguarding team takes appropriate action in response to concerns raised. These actions are quick and are recorded in detail. Leaders work closely with other agencies, when needed, to ensure that pupils are safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders are new to their post. They have not had the opportunity to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum. This prevents them from knowing if pupils are learning as well as they should. It also stops them from providing clear guidance for their colleagues on how to deliver the curriculum. Senior leaders should ensure that new subject leaders have a greater influence over the quality of education in their areas of responsibility. This will help to ensure that pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding in these subjects.
- Some staff, including those who are new to the school, have not received subject-specific training in all areas of the curriculum. This means that in some subjects, pupils are not able to achieve as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that staff have the necessary subject-specific knowledge to deliver the full curriculum with confidence. This will help staff to deliver the curriculum with higher levels of expertise, to help pupils to know and remember more.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in January 2011.

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	132155
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10199587
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jackie Woods
Headteacher	Joanna Murphy
Website	www.willowgroveprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 January 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, PHSE and mathematics. They held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. They also talked to pupils about their learning, and scrutinised their work.
- In addition, inspectors considered other subjects as part of this inspection. They held discussions with the subject leaders, sampled work and talked to pupils.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and reviewed documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with a representative of the local authority and external school partnership leaders. They reviewed a range of documents including those related to the school's self-evaluation and governance.

- Inspectors talked to staff and pupils. They analysed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also talked to parents before the school day.

Inspection team

Simon Hunter, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Morley

Ofsted Inspector

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