

Inspection of Wixams Tree Primary School

Green Lane, Wixams, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 6BA

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 January 2022

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

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff embody Wixams Tree Primary School's motto 'be kind, be kind, be kind'. Pupils behave well and work hard to achieve the 'rainbow rewards'. They take pride in receiving the special certificates.

Pupils like the extra-curricular opportunities on offer, including school trips, workshops and clubs. Pupils were particularly excited about an upcoming art workshop and the plans to paint a mural outside to showcase their creativity.

Because the school is expanding, new pupils join frequently. These pupils receive a warm welcome, saying they feel happy in their new school. Pupils say they rarely have concerns about bullying, but they know how to report them if they do. This helps pupils to feel listened to and safe in school.

Pupils know staff aim to help them achieve their best. Pupils learn lots of interesting topics, complemented by storybooks their teachers read to them. However, there are flaws in the early reading curriculum that hinder some pupils' ability to read independently. Pupils need staff to address these flaws quickly, otherwise they could hold back some pupils' learning in the wider curriculum.

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

Pupils enjoy being read to and like reading. However, pupils at an early stage of reading are not learning to read well. Some of these pupils may know the sounds letters make, but they cannot read these confidently in words in the books they receive. Leaders rely on teachers to organise additional support for pupils not keeping up with the pace of the phonics programme. Some teachers and teaching assistants do not have the knowledge to do this well. Therefore, the extra support some pupils receive is not helping them. Leaders have not monitored the quality or impact of this support, so have not started to put this right.

The shortcomings in curriculum design for early reading are not evident in other areas of the curriculum. Leaders have carefully considered what content they want teachers to teach pupils. Leaders have devised appropriate assessment systems. Teachers use the school's 'flashback 4' approach to revisit and reinforce pupils' previous learning. This helps pupils to see progress in their learning. It also helps teachers identify if changes need to be made to what content is taught, and when.

Because staff are keen and kind, children in the early years settle quickly. Many children listen attentively to adults. Children take care of the books and equipment in their classroom. Some activities are closely matched to children's needs, particularly in Reception. These inspire and challenge children to do well. However, the activities children complete in the Nursery are often focused on the activities children will undertake, rather than on what they should learn. Provision for pupils is not as effective in the Nursery as it is in Reception.

The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) varies. Where leaders work closely with staff, parents and external agencies to identify pupils' needs and arrange timely support, pupils do well. However, many pupils with SEND require help with reading and staff do not have the knowledge to identify the barriers which impede these pupils' ability to read. Again, leaders' monitoring and support of this aspect of SEND provision has not addressed this.

Leaders have thought carefully about how they want to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. For example, through the music curriculum, pupils learn about other cultures while learning to play different instruments, such as the steel pan or the ukulele. In personal, social and health education, pupils watch a video before they discuss and debate the right thing to do. These videos introduce pupils to topics, such as 'stranger danger', in a sensitive way. Pupils learn to listen to one another and reach a mature understanding.

Leaders' approach to monitoring attendance ensures pupils' attendance is high in the context of the pandemic. There is a clear system that challenges and supports parents. It helps to quickly address issues with a pupil's attendance or punctuality.

Staff and parents report positively on their relationships with leaders. Teachers feel comfortable to approach leaders with questions or concerns. Early career teachers (ECTs) receive helpful guidance from their mentors which helps them improve their teaching. Many parents who responded to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, say leaders and their staff are friendly and helpful.

Those responsible for governance do not challenge or check school leaders' work as well as they should. For example, members of the local advisory body raised concerns about the early reading curriculum, but did not push school leaders to address these quickly. Directors in the trust do not speak knowingly about their systems for checking that the curriculum on offer to pupils is the best it can be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders check that training ensures staff have the knowledge to identify pupils at risk of harm. Staff know how to report concerns and leaders check these concerns are followed through with external services in a timely manner. This helps vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they need.

Leaders' simple motto 'be kind, be kind, be kind' and its partner phrase, 'tell, tell, tell', create an environment where pupils feel able to voice their concerns.

Leaders work with the trust's human resources department to manage the statutory checks on staff and visitors. There were some minor administrative matters which leaders remedied during inspection, due to miscommunication between the trust and the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff lack the knowledge and training to identify the barriers that impede some pupils' ability to read. Staff provide some pupils with books containing words they cannot read. As a result, some pupils do not learn to read well enough. Leaders must put in place an ambitious early reading curriculum and provide staff with the training and resources they need to teach all pupils to read fluently.
- Not all staff in the early years have the knowledge and experience to organise ambitious activities for children. Some children complete activities that are not well matched to their needs. Leaders must ensure all staff receive training to help them organise and teach a curriculum that is well matched to children's needs.
- Leaders do not monitor the quality of education astutely. They do not quickly identify those teachers or teaching assistants who need training and guidance to best support all pupils. Leaders must ensure there is focused, timely monitoring that informs curriculum development and staff training to ensure a high-quality education for all pupils.
- Those responsible for governance lack knowledge about the quality of education in the school. They do not use development plans well to ensure prompt improvements. Governors must ensure school leaders' development plans are formed in a way that allows governors to hold school leaders to account for school improvement.

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	143926
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10212077
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	383
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Anthony Abrahams
Headteacher	Mary Langley
Website	www.wixamstreeprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Wixams Tree Primary School opened in September 2017. The school is expanding to a larger-than-average primary school, providing education for three- to 11-year-olds.
- The school is part of the Bedford College Academies Trust.

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 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, history and music.
- For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their

learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector and a team inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead and the SEND coordinator, two assistant headteachers and the mentors to the ECTs.
- The lead inspector held meetings with those responsible for governance, including four directors and two members of the local advisory body.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including records of meetings and reports from external advisers.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding lead and a deputy designated safeguarding lead. The lead inspector met with four directors and also met with the headteacher and office manager to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. Inspectors also spoke with teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils, including the school council. Inspectors also considered the 200 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by reviewing the 101 responses and 73 free-text comments submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them. Inspectors took account of the 22 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

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