

Inspection of William Harding School

Hazlehurst Drive, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 9TJ

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong sense of community at William Harding School. It is a calm and orderly school. Leaders set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. This has created a positive environment where all pupils can learn. Pupils are happy, feel safe and enjoy coming to school. They say that bullying does not happen often. When it does, adults deal with it quickly. Pupils know that they can talk to a member of staff if they are worried.

Leaders believe in every child. They are ambitious and want pupils to develop as subject specialists. Pupils are confident about their learning and enjoy the work they do. They love reading and value the range of books in the school library. They talk enthusiastically about the books that they have shared together in class.

Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of clubs and activities. They can volunteer in the community. Older pupils carry out bag packing in the supermarket and younger pupils keep the school site tidy. Pupils learn responsibility through caring for the many animals in school. In debating assemblies, pupils discuss and develop their own ideas by building on the thoughts of others and sharing their views.

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

The headteacher's sharp and focused actions have created a school of which pupils, staff and parents feel proud. She has ensured that the school is safe and pupils are put first. She has established a learning environment which is orderly and purposeful. Governors know the school well. They have ensured that new governors bring the right skills. Governors rigorously check the impact of leaders' actions.

Leaders have improved communication with parents. This is helping parents understand the necessary changes at the school. Leaders recognise that they have further work to do to engage all parents positively.

Staff are on board with leaders' vision. They readily sign up to 'The William Harding Way', which has brought consistency to all year groups. However, sometimes leaders ask teachers to do more planning than is needed. Leaders are reflecting on this and are listening to staff about workload.

The curriculum is well planned and sequenced. It is designed for pupils to build their knowledge. Pupils can talk confidently about what they have learned and remembered. For example, pupils in Year 5 were able to use prior knowledge about Alexander the Great to understand how revolution can be applied to different periods of time. Learning to be physically active starts in pre-school. Younger children learn well inside the classroom and in the outdoor environment. They are eager to share what they know.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use this, along with detailed explanations and modelling, to make sure pupils know exactly what they are learning and why. However, teachers sometimes set different outcomes than leaders set out. Rather than helping pupils, it has the opposite effect because they do not learn all the knowledge that is planned.

Teachers use activities and assessments well to check what pupils know. In mathematics, for example, teachers revisit key knowledge and practise key concepts to ensure pupils are confident before moving on.

There is a highly effective and consistent approach to teaching early reading. Children get off to a quick start. Teachers skilfully intervene when pupils need extra practice to read fluently. Teachers use the phonics programme's assessments well to ensure pupils keep up. Leaders have ensured pupils have many opportunities to engage with books. Older pupils enjoy the daily uninterrupted reading time.

Leaders have focused on accurately identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They use a range of well-chosen assessments, work closely with parents and seek advice from external agencies. Adults support pupils with SEND well, in the resourced provision units and the main school, or example through pre-teaching content or using additional resources.

Pupils understand how the school's behaviour system works. Older pupils said it makes them think about their behaviour and take responsibility. Pupils acknowledge that occasionally there are some pupils who do not always follow the rules, which can disturb learning.

There are many opportunities for developing pupils' character. Focused 'learning days' enhance pupils' understanding, for example of personal safety and awareness of different disabilities. Pupils know the importance of being kind and respectful. They value the range of ways that their school helps them develop these characteristics. Pupils are tolerant and accepting. They value difference. However, their knowledge about similarities and differences between religious faiths and cultures requires further work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is high on everyone's agenda. The headteacher has focused on every aspect of school life, including site safety. Leaders work closely with outside agencies and families to provide the right support.

Pupils talk confidently about how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about railway safety, given its proximity.

Leaders regularly update staff's training. Governors check regularly that the school's safeguarding procedures are compliant.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always plan the right tasks for all pupils. This limits some pupils' knowledge acquisition. Leaders need to support teachers to consistently set tasks that enable all pupils to learn the planned curriculum well.
- At times, leaders expect staff to plan in ways that create unnecessary workload. This takes away teachers' time from focusing on the right things. Leaders need to think about what the most important things are that teachers are asked to do in order to teach the school's curriculum effectively.

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	110358
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10210986
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	897
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sally Perkins
Headteacher	Trudy Cotchin
Website	www.williamhardingschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 October 2016 and 15 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in 2018.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions for pupils with SEND. One is for pupils with physical disabilities. The other is for speech, language and communication needs. Each provision has spaces for eight pupils.
- This school uses one registered alternative provider.

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 school leaders and have taken it into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, three governors, including the chair, and representatives from the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, art, history, mathematics, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and pupils' books in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to review their knowledge, records and actions, and also reviewed information about the safer recruitment of staff.
- To review wider judgements, inspectors spoke to staff and groups of pupils, and observed behaviour in classrooms, at lunchtime and in breakfast club.
- The views of staff, including 58 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey, were considered.
- The 80 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 66 written responses, were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Charlotte Wilson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Shaughnessy	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Vallence	Ofsted Inspector
Fiona Henderson	Ofsted Inspector

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