

Inspection of Willow Brook Primary School and Nursery

Barnardiston Road, Colchester, Essex CO4 0DT

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 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?

Willow Brook is at the heart of the local community. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel happy and safe because adults are caring and kind, and know pupils as individuals. Adults care deeply about pupils. This means they are well looked after, and their social and emotional needs are well met.

The newly revised curriculum helps pupils learn and remember more. Pupils say lessons have become more interesting. They enjoy having to think harder and are proud of how much they know about different subjects.

Adults expect pupils to behave well. Pupils' positive behaviour means the school is a calm and purposeful place. Typically, they get on well with one another and enjoy spending time with their friends. Although bullying is rare, if it happens, adults deal with it quickly. This is also the case if friends fall out with each other.

Pupils are proud to be members of the 'house' teams. They enjoy working together to earn weekly rewards for their houses as recognition for their behaviour and attitude towards their work.

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

Leaders have worked hard to improve the culture of the school. They, along with trust leaders, have galvanised staff to strive towards a high quality of education for pupils.

Adults have high ambitions for pupils. This is reflected in the curriculum pupils now learn. Leaders have thought carefully about the important knowledge they want pupils to know and remember. They have recently put in place an improved curriculum in many subjects. Where, in the past, pupils did not always receive a high-quality education, they have gaps in important knowledge that they still need to learn. Now, though, pupils are learning well, catching up and rapidly gaining detailed knowledge across all subjects.

Teachers design activities for pupils which help them remember their learning. Before embarking on new learning, teachers are careful to revise what pupils already know, for example through revision questions at the start of a lesson. One pupil said this, 'Fires up my mind and I'm ready for learning.' Teachers then build in regular recall activities during lessons which help pupils remember new learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Adults adapt some of their activities to help them learn well.

Making sure that pupils learn to read takes top priority. Adults have an accurate picture of where the youngest pupils are on their reading journey. Phonics teaching is precisely matched to pupils' needs. Consequently, they learn to read confidently and fluently. Older pupils read more complex stories and plays, such as

Shakespeare's Macbeth in Year 6. Pupils who fall behind with reading are supported well to help them catch up.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are immersed in language. Adults are skilled at helping children learn and use many new words. They delight in retelling stories and using them in their play, such as when they worked together to find the Gingerbread Man. Early years children are supported to become more independent. Many children concentrate well when taking part in activities and keep going if they get stuck.

Lessons run smoothly and are rarely disrupted. Pupils love receiving 'points' for their positive behaviour, to add to their weekly 'house' totals. Typically, pupils behave well in school. Leaders' actions have improved the attendance of pupils who did not attend school regularly enough in the past.

Pupils learn about different religions and cultures. This helps them show respect for people who have different beliefs from themselves. Pupils' social and emotional well-being is supported through the school's 'a champion of every child' (ACE) strategy. Pupils share their concerns or worries with an adult who knows them well and can support them. Opportunities provided for pupils to widen their experiences beyond the classroom have been limited due to the pandemic. For example, they have not been able to attend many clubs, go on trips or take part in sporting events. Leaders have plans to build in trips to support the curriculum, but these are in the early stages.

Members of the local governing board work in harmony with trust leaders to challenge and support school leaders. They make regular visits to see for themselves how effectively recent changes are bedding in.

Senior leaders manage staff's workload effectively. Teachers have received high-quality training to help them implement leaders' ambitious curriculum. Leaders have clear plans in place to continue this training, to ensure that teachers are confident and skilled in implementing the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture of vigilance. Adults are well trained and know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. Leaders ensure pupils who need extra support receive the right help from the right service. Often, this help comes from skilled adults in school, who support pupils' well-being extremely well. Leaders' records of concerns are detailed. Systems and processes are strong. This helps to ensure concerns are not missed.

Pupils are taught how to protect themselves, especially when using the internet. Thorough checks are made on staff joining the school. These checks are recorded meticulously.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Changes to the curriculum in some subjects are still in their early stages. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers receive the appropriate training and support to be able to deliver all aspects of the curriculum equally well and to continue to improve pupils' achievement.
- As a result of historic weaknesses in the curriculum that no longer remain, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge in some subjects. Leaders should ensure they support teachers to clearly identify these gaps and provide appropriate support and adaptations to help pupils learn the important knowledge they have missed.
- The chances pupils receive to experience wider opportunities such as extra-curricular activities, trips and taking on responsibilities in school have been limited. Leaders should ensure they fully implement their plans to broaden the experiences pupils receive.

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.

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	141195
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10242022
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gaenor Bagley
Headteacher	Rob Leach
Website	www.willow-brook-pri.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT).
- The executive headteacher started working with the school as a consultant in May 2022. He became the executive headteacher in September 2022. A number of other senior leaders have joined the school recently.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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: reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about

their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.

- Inspectors evaluated the curriculum plans and spoke to leaders and pupils about several other subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and several other senior leaders. The lead inspector held meetings with members of the local governing body and senior leaders from TKAT.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record and reviewed safeguarding paperwork and systems. Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, governors and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in school.
- Inspectors considered the responses and free-text comments to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, along with the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Natalie Sansom

Ofsted Inspector

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