

Inspection of Willowbank Primary School

Manitoba Gardens, Cullompton, Devon EX15 1EZ

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

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 Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming and inclusive school. They describe the school as a fun place to be. Pupils say the school provides 'an open door' to new people. They talk confidently about the way in which everyone accepts one another for who they are.

Leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils understand the school rules and respond well to the routines that are in place. If disruption does occur, staff deal with this quickly and effectively. While many parents recognise and praise the school's work, some raised concerns about pupils' behaviour. Inspectors saw pupils behaving well and the school's records demonstrate the impact of leaders' actions on improving behaviour over time.

Pupils are happy and feel safe. They say that if bullying does happen, they trust adults to deal with it quickly. Leaders place a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' social and emotional well-being. As a result, relationships between staff and pupils are positive.

Pupils enjoy the range of clubs on offer to them, such as coding and dance. They value the opportunities they have to become prefects and librarians. Pupils say that these roles help them to become responsible members of the school and to set a positive example to others.

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

Leaders have high expectations for what all pupils can achieve, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have created a curriculum that is designed well. They have carefully considered what pupils need to know and when they need to know it.

Reading is a priority in the school. Leaders ensure that pupils have many opportunities to listen to and read a wide range of texts, known as the 'Super 6'. Pupils say that this helps them develop their understanding of diversity and deepens their knowledge of the wider world.

Children in the early years are taught phonics as soon as they start school. They learn and remember new sounds well. Staff benefit from the training they receive to teach phonics effectively. If pupils fall behind, they receive the support they need to help them to catch up quickly. Pupils read books with increasing accuracy, fluency and expression as they move through the school.

The mathematics curriculum is designed and sequenced well. This starts in the early years. Staff develop children's mathematical vocabulary from an early age. They encourage children to talk about and use their knowledge of number. Children respond well to this. They recognise number patterns and confidently make links to

what they know about shapes. Pupils build on this as they move through the school. They confidently explain their mathematical thinking when working with larger numbers.

Pupils learn well in most of the wider curriculum subjects. In physical education, for example, leaders have identified the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. Teachers make checks to find out how well pupils understand what they are learning. Children in the early years develop their ball control and understanding of space well because of this. However, in some other areas of the curriculum, this is not the case. Pupils are not clear about what they are learning. They struggle to remember what they have learned before. Teachers do not routinely check what pupils know well enough before moving on to new learning. This makes it difficult for pupils to build their knowledge.

Leaders are ambitious for what pupils with SEND can achieve. Pupils' plans are precise and regularly reviewed. Staff know pupils well. This is particularly the case for pupils with social and emotional needs who attend the learning hub, known as the 'Willow Branch'. As a result, pupils with SEND receive the support they need to enable them to access a broad and balanced curriculum.

Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They behave well in lessons and during social times. In early years, children are eager to learn. They listen to instructions carefully and are respectful to one another. They get off to a successful start because of this.

Leaders support pupils' personal development well. Pupils talk confidently about fundamental British values, such as respect and democracy. They understand that people are different and why tolerance is important.

Trustees and local governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They provide appropriate support and challenge to school leaders. Staff, including those who are new to teaching, value the time and training they receive to develop their subject knowledge. They appreciate how leaders consider their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure there is a clear safeguarding culture across the school. They know their vulnerable pupils and their families well. Leaders provide staff with up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff understand how to identify any signs of concern and to report them quickly because of this. Leaders work well with a range of external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the help they need. They make the required safeguarding checks during recruitment.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in the real and online world. They talk confidently about the dangers of computer viruses and how to report concerns to a trusted adult.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not check well enough what pupils know and remember. Subsequent learning does not take into account pupils' prior knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not build their knowledge well over time and this slows the progress they make across the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that teachers check what pupils know and remember across all subjects and use this to inform future learning.

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	145763
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10256583
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	254
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alex Walmsley
Headteacher	Sophie Hillson
Website	www.willowbank.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Willowbank Primary School converted to become an academy school in September 2018. When its predecessor school, Willowbank Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be requires improvement overall.
- The school is part of The First Federation Trust.
- The school has a learning base, known as the 'Willow Branch', which supports pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- There is a before-school club managed by the governing body.

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 met with the headteacher, subject leaders, staff, pupils and representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics art and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, looked at samples of work and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding. The inspector also scrutinised the school's single central record.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ben Jordan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lisa Dadds	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Lees	Ofsted Inspector

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