

# Inspection of a good school: The Willink School

School Lane, Burghfield Common, Reading, Berkshire RG7 3XJ

---

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 October 2023

## **Outcome**

The Willink School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are justly proud of their school. They benefit from a highly ambitious curriculum and broad range of subjects. Staff and pupils are enthused by the school's 'Village School, Global Outlook' vision and the many opportunities on offer. Pupils typically enjoy school and achieve well. As one parent said, 'The Willink is an exciting school and offers so many opportunities to inspire the children. It's a great place to learn and grow.'

Pupils benefit from the very high levels of pastoral care and coordinated support that The Willink offers. This is a school where pupils are known as individuals, and staff work together to raise aspirations and help pupils to achieve their goals. Learning is enriched through an impressive array of clubs, trips and visiting speakers. Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available, particularly delighting in the range of performing arts and sporting opportunities.

Positive relationships underpin the typically calm, courteous behaviour across the school. Pupils understand and follow the school's behaviour system. Any form of deliberate unkindness is rare. Pupils know and trust the adults they can turn to should they have any concerns. Sixth-form students are rightly proud of the active role they take in supporting younger pupils.

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

The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils can be successful, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Staff have worked together effectively to forge an ambitious curriculum that is typically well sequenced, building knowledge and skills from Year 7 to Year 13. Teachers' checks on pupils' learning are well planned. Most teachers adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with SEND well. The school is rightly prioritising further staff training so teachers identify and address any gaps in knowledge that disadvantaged pupils have so that they achieve more highly.

The ambition and breadth of the curriculum are impressive and pupils achieve well. Nearly all pupils take the suite of subjects known as the English Baccalaureate. All pupils are expected to study religious education and at least one modern foreign language at GCSE. In addition, there are a suite of vocational courses on offer in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Sixth-form students are achieving well and are well prepared for their next steps in education or employment.

Teachers generally have high expectations, and pupils respond by producing work of a good standard. Pupils reflect on their learning over time, making links to what they have studied before and how it links to what they are learning about now. Most teachers check pupils' prior understanding well before explaining new subject matter and meet the needs of different groups of pupils effectively. However, occasionally, this is not the case. Subsequently, some pupils' attention wanders and they can become disengaged from their learning or distracted.

Systems are in place to check pupils' reading skills. Trained staff and older pupils offer bespoke reading support to help pupils to read accurately and fluently. The school gives high priority to developing reading, helping pupils learn how to read confidently.

All pupils, including pupils with SEND and those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, benefit from the huge range of opportunities on offer beyond the taught curriculum. Hard-working, passionate staff offer pupils access to over 40 regular clubs and 80 trips each year. Additional competitions and events provide opportunities for pupils to work with groups and organisations beyond the school. For example, sixth-form students link with local businesses on projects to advance their understanding of the world of work.

Provision for pupils' personal development is first class. Pupils and students have multiple opportunities to learn about building positive relationships, tolerance and equality, as well as how to keep themselves safe and healthy. The school's ethos underpins the house system, the well-organised personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, assemblies and most subject areas. Consequently, pupils are provided with ample opportunities to learn the importance of respecting different cultures, languages and religions.

Leaders and governors consider workload carefully and provide opportunities for staff to be involved in any changes, including the recent development of the school's new vision and aims. Teachers and support staff are well supported.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Some teachers' approaches to checking what some pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, already know and can do requires further refinement.

These pupils are not always given the right tasks and opportunities to address any gaps in their knowledge. Building on the good practice in the school, leaders should ensure all staff have expertise in adapting their teaching to enhance the achievement of all pupils.

- Occasionally, there is some inconsistency in teachers' implementation of the planned curriculum. Consequently, some pupils are not challenged as well as they could be. Some pupils do not have their needs met fully and can struggle to engage and concentrate as well as they could. The school should make sure that consistently effective teaching and behaviour management actively engage all pupils.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2014.

## 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110048
<b>Local authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10296149
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,254
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	234
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Margaret Baxter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicolle Browning
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.willinkschool.org.uk">www.willinkschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Deep dives were conducted in English, science, history, performing arts, media and business studies. As part of these, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils about their work and met with teaching staff to talk about their approach to designing and delivering the curriculum. In addition, a meeting was held with leaders of PSHE to discuss curriculum planning and provision in this area.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, staff and those with responsibility for governance. The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and other members of teaching and support staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents, including those relating to behaviour, attendance and governance.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils to discuss their views about many different aspects of their school and to talk about their work. The lead inspector also held informal conversations with pupils at breaktime and during a tour of the school.
- The views of parents and staff represented in meetings and the responses to Ofsted surveys were considered.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the school's policies and practices and met with the designated safeguarding leads. Records of safeguarding incidents were scrutinised and discussed. The lead inspector also reviewed the school's records of the recruitment checks made on adults working in the school.

### **Inspection team**

Matthew Newberry, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
James Lovell	Ofsted Inspector
Ginny Rhodes	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023