

Inspection of a good school: Willington Primary School

Chapel Street, Willington, Crook, County Durham DL15 0EQ

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 October 2023

Outcome

Willington Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Willington Primary school is at the heart of the community. The school offers valuable support to pupils and their families. Pupils are keen to attend this welcoming and nurturing school.

The school is united in the ambition to give all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the best start in their education, both academically and socially. Pupils are very proud of their school. They respond well to the school's high expectations.

Pupils are friendly and respectful. They benefit from caring relationships with staff. This helps pupils to feel happy, safe and secure.

Pupils understand fairness, equality and diversity. Older pupils, in their roles as play leaders, enjoy supporting younger pupils. This promotes the caring ethos of the school.

Behaviour is good. Pupils understand that bullying can happen. If it does, they know that adults will help to ensure that it does not happen again. Pupils appreciate the support and guidance that they receive from staff.

Pupils have opportunities to develop their talents and interests through extra-curricular clubs, such as sewing and craft club. The school encourages pupils to be responsible citizens. Pupils are proud to take on various leadership roles, such as sports leaders, school councillors and book elves.

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

Leaders have designed a broad, ambitious and stimulating curriculum for all pupils, including pupils with SEND. However, in some foundation subjects, the school has not yet clearly identified the most essential knowledge and vocabulary that pupils are to be

taught and to learn across each year group. Work to address this is already under way, but there remains more to do.

In national assessments in 2022, pupils did not perform well. Leaders have taken swift and effective action to address this. There are still some gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school now provides effective, targeted support for those pupils who need to catch up.

Teachers have strong knowledge of the different subjects that they teach. They understand how pupils' new learning should build on what they already know. Teachers frequently check pupils' understanding. If teachers identify misconceptions, they adapt their teaching to address them.

The school prioritises reading. Well-trained staff deliver the phonics programme effectively across the early years and key stage 1. Staff ensure that pupils read books that are well matched to the sounds that they know. This helps pupils to read with increasing fluency and confidence. Pupils who need extra help are swiftly identified. They are given the support that they need to catch up. The school invests in high-quality books that pupils love to read. Older pupils are keen readers. They speak enthusiastically about books and authors they have studied.

In mathematics, teachers use a range of resources to illustrate concepts clearly. This helps pupils to grasp new learning securely. Pupils use mathematical vocabulary well to explain their thinking. Teachers ask questions to help pupils understand new learning and to deepen their thinking. Pupils have regular opportunities to apply their knowledge through solving mathematical problems.

The school has given careful thought to designing a curriculum that provides children in the early years with a strong start. Children are happy in their environment. However, the learning environment is not well organised. There are limited opportunities for children to learn, explore and talk. This prevents some children from securing the knowledge and independence that they need to be ready for life in Year 1. The school is aware of the changes required to improve this aspect of the school.

Leaders understand the needs of pupils with SEND extremely well. Their needs are identified quickly and effectively. Pupils with SEND receive appropriate help and support so they can learn the same curriculum as their friends. Teachers support these pupils effectively in lessons. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND are fully included in all wider-school activities.

Pupils, including children in the early years, behave sensibly in and around the school. On the rare occasion when a pupil forgets to follow the school rules, adults sensitively remind them how to behave. Learning is very rarely disturbed by any instances of poor behaviour.

The school provides pupils with many opportunities to learn about the wider world. Pupils learn about potential local dangers, such as river safety. They know that it is important to stay healthy, both mentally and physically. Pupils learn about different cultures, faiths and types of families. Pupils respect others' differences and say that everyone is welcome at their school.

Governors are clear about the school's priorities. They support and challenge leaders' work effectively. Most staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the support that leaders provide for their well-being and workload. There is a strong team spirit.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some foundation subjects are not sufficiently well developed. The school has not identified the most important knowledge and vocabulary to be taught. This means that teachers are sometimes unclear about what pupils need to learn. As a result, this sometimes prevents pupils from acquiring all the important knowledge that they need. The school should ensure that it precisely identifies what pupils need to learn across each year group.
- The early years environment does not support the ambition of the curriculum. The chosen resources limit the opportunities for children to learn and to become independent. The school should ensure that it creates a high-quality, enabling environment that promotes the interest and independence of all children.

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 April 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

Unique reference number	114066
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10290018
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Olwyn Gunn
Headteacher	Katherine Harker
Website	www.willington.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since September 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has a falling number of pupils on roll.

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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited

a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to pupils reading.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons at different times of the day and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. The inspector spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including the minutes of governors' meetings and the school improvement plans, and the school's website.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff's, pupils' and parents' views.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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