

Inspection of Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy

Roborough Green, Thurnby Lodge, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 2NA

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 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 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The Acting Principal of this school is Rebecca Pickard. This school is part of The Mead Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sarah Ridley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Glover.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Working hard, showing kindness and being responsible make up the 'Willowbrook Way'. Pupils have a firm understanding of these values. Staff model these qualities and pupils try their best to show them.

The aim at Willowbrook is for all pupils to have bright futures. To achieve this ambition, the 'Removing Barriers to Learning' team ensures that all pupils are ready to learn and able to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils thrive in this inclusive, nurturing environment.

Pupils behave well. They are enthusiastic about the subjects they study. Most pupils listen well and sustain their concentration in lessons. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They know to challenge someone's behaviour if it is unkind or inappropriate.

Staff go the extra mile for the pupils at Willowbrook. Their top priority is to make all pupils feel welcome and at ease. Pupils feel happy and valued in this homely, inclusive environment. The school's special 'Hygge Room' is a cosy, safe space for pupils in need of emotional support. Pupils say, 'The staff are so nice here – they always check how you are and sort things out to make sure you feel good.'

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

Staff are passionate about the subjects they lead. The school has ensured that subject curriculums clearly set out what pupils will learn and when. The curriculum in the early years has been broken down into a series of small steps so that children can become secure in the important knowledge and skills they need for their future learning. Developing pupils' spoken language is a key aim of the curriculum. Staff explain the meaning of technical words in lessons and encourage pupils to use precise terminology. In mathematics, for example, Year 6 pupils confidently use the terms denominator, numerator and factor to add and subtract fractions.

While pupils have a firm understanding of the curriculum content they are covering now, their recall of what they have been taught before is much less secure in some subjects. In history, for example, pupils are not knowledgeable about important concepts that help to make sense of the past. This is because the key knowledge that pupils need to remember is not revisited regularly and systematically in all subjects.

All staff have been trained to teach phonics. However, they do not always use all the strategies that are set out in the school's chosen phonics programme. Some elements of the scheme are occasionally left out which means pupils do not secure their knowledge of letter sounds or become fluent readers as quickly as they might. Pupils really enjoy the novels they read in English lessons. These texts have been carefully selected to expose pupils to a range of genres and to teach them about

conflict, mental well-being, family dynamics and stewardship of our planet. Pupils enjoy these stories, and they take life lessons from reading them.

Staff have high expectations of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that lessons are adapted to take account of pupils' individual needs. This means that pupils with SEND have full access to the curriculum and the school's wider offer. The designated specialist provision, called 'The Willow', provides a nurturing environment and bespoke support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

The school's systems for managing pupils' behaviour and attendance, and for responding to safeguarding concerns, are very effective. The school's 'Vulnerability Index' ensures there is joined-up thinking across the school so that pupils and families get the support they need straight away.

Pupils benefit from a rich variety of experiences to broaden their horizons. This includes trips to the seaside and listening to an orchestra at De Montfort Hall, as well as enjoying a three-course meal before watching a West End show. The school's personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum prepares pupils for the challenges and issues they face in their local area. There is a vast array of extra-curricular club opportunities on offer at Willowbrook which pupils can access free of charge. Pupils learn about difference and diversity, and they show respect for others. However, pupils' knowledge of British values and equality is not as secure as the school intends.

The trust ensures that frequent checks are made on all aspects of the school's work. These assurance measures provide the school with effective support and challenge. Staff appreciate the consideration given to their well-being, workload and career development. They say, 'This is a happy school, where people are welcomed and valued.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, pupils do not remember what they have been taught before in sufficient detail. They recall the things they have done before rather than the important knowledge they need to use again. This prevents pupils from building on their prior learning and deepening their understanding of key concepts. Leaders must ensure that staff systematically revisit the crucial content that pupils need to retain, helping them to remember it over the long term.
- Sometimes, staff do not use the strategies set out in the school's phonics programme. When this happens, pupils do not develop their knowledge of letter

sounds as quickly as they might. The school must ensure that staff implement all aspects of the school's phonics programme consistently so that every pupil gets the help they need to become a fluent reader as quickly as possible.

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	142857
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10288352
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	451
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anthony Glover
CEO of the trust	Sarah Ridley
Acting Principal	Rebecca Pickard
Website	http://www.willowbrook-tmet.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy converted to become an academy school in June 2016 as part of The Mead Educational Trust. When its predecessor school, Willowbrook Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science, art and design, history, and physical education (PE). For the deep dives, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculums for music and writing. They spoke to pupils about their learning in these subjects.
- Inspectors met with the Acting Principal, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders and a sample of teaching and support staff, including teachers in the early stages of their teaching career. Inspectors met with the leaders with responsibility disadvantaged pupils, behaviour, attendance, and personal development. Inspectors also met with the leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND and the school's designated specialist provision for pupils with SEMH needs.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, and documentation relating to governance.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils in Years 1, Year 2 and Year 3 read to a familiar adult. Inspectors met with groups of pupils from across the school.
- The lead inspector met with executive leaders from The Mead Educational Trust, as well as members of the academy council and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the results of the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Shaun Carter, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Karen Lewis	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Anderson	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Slack	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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023