

Inspection of Willow Primary Academy

Evenlode Road, Tuffley, Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL4 0JY

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 January 2024

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 headteacher of this school is Pete Hales. This school is part of SAND Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Martin Hughes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Antonia Noble.

What is it like to attend this school?

Willow Primary Academy is a caring and inclusive school. Many children start in Reception Year below what would typically be expected for their age. However, as a result of a well-thought-out curriculum and high expectations, children get off to a flying start. Children learn the school values of 'PRIDE' as soon as they start in Reception. This prepares them well for their time in school.

The school is at the heart of the community. Many parents would recommend the school. One parent's comment, which summed up the views of many, was, 'The school is amazing in every possible way.' Parents have confidence in the leadership of the school.

Pupils feel safe and they are. They say that adults in school help them if they have a concern. Older pupils say that, in the past, there were some incidents of bullying. However, they are confident that this is no longer the case. Pupils are caring and thoughtful towards each other. They behave well in lessons and during social times.

Pupils benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. For example, pupils develop their resilience because of the residential experiences on offer to them.

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

The new headteacher has galvanised staff. They feel part of a team and share an unwavering determination to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential. The school is ambitious for pupils. Local governors and trustees know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They provide effective, high-quality support and challenge.

Pupils follow an ambitious curriculum. While pupils' published outcomes in key stage 2 are low, this is not reflective of the quality of education in place for current pupils. Reading has a high priority. As soon as children enter the Reception Year, they learn to read effectively. All staff are well trained to teach the phonics curriculum. Teachers identify swiftly any pupils who need extra help. Pupils read books that are well matched to the sounds that they know. In turn, this builds pupils' confidence and fluency. Once pupils have understood the phonics code, they follow a well-thought-out curriculum. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the wide range of books they read.

In most subjects, the curriculum supports pupils to build their knowledge over time. For example, in mathematics, teaching helps pupils to deepen their knowledge by revisiting key concepts regularly. However, in some subjects, the sequencing of what pupils need to know and understand is not as well thought out. For example, pupils' writing in key stage 2 sometimes lacks fluency and accuracy because pupils do not draw on their previous learning to help them.

Staff use what they know through the assessment of pupils' learning to inform curriculum thinking. However, in some subjects, teachers' use of assessment is not fully developed. Where this is the case, leaders do not have a clear picture of whether pupils have learned the curriculum as intended. Consequently, some pupils do not learn all elements of the curriculum securely.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. Teaching is adapted in a way that supports pupils to learn the curriculum successfully. Staff benefit from the expertise of staff who work in the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This provision is a hive of activity where warm and caring relationships between adults and pupils permeate. Parents describe it as 'a beacon of inclusivity and compassion'.

The school has established a positive learning environment. Pupils are visibly happy and enjoy school. This starts in the Reception class, where children settle quickly into routines. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The school's values of being positive, respectful, recognising individuality, determination and excellence are the backbone of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils in key stage 2 have gaps in their writing knowledge and skills. This means that their writing lacks fluency and accuracy. The school and the trust must embed and evaluate the approach to the teaching of writing so that it has a positive impact on pupils' ability to write well.
- In some subjects, the use of assessment is not fully developed. Staff, therefore, do not have an accurate overview of whether pupils have learned what was intended. The school and the trust need to ensure that assessment is used to inform curriculum planning to support pupils' next steps in 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' is used to mean pupils with 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	147726
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10298093
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	196
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Antonia Noble
CEO	Martin Hughes
Headteacher	Pete Hales
Website	Willow.sandmat.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in June 2022.
- The school is part of SAND Academies Trust. It converted to become an academy in 2021.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 30 pupils. This provision is primarily for pupils with autism, language and communication needs.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.
- There is a breakfast club operated by the school.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors 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 held meetings with representatives from the trust, the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders, teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the local advisory board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history, English and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- The lead inspector examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement planning.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Spence Allen

Ofsted Inspector

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