

# Inspection of a good school: Willowcroft Community School

Mereland Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 8BA

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Inspection dates:

5 and 6 March 2024

## **Outcome**

Willowcroft Community School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Amanda Doy. This school is part of the OPEN (Oxfordshire Primary Education Network) Umbrella Trust. The trust is led jointly by the four headteachers who take overall responsibility for their own school.

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

Pupils are rightly proud of their happy and nurturing school. They demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning and others. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. Staff have high expectations for all pupils to succeed academically, emotionally and socially. Pupils rise to these and achieve well.

The school's values of 'resilience, reflectiveness, resourcefulness and reciprocity' are firmly rooted in daily routines. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic learners and contribute thoughtfully to discussions. They enjoy taking up a wide range of leadership roles. Pupils value these responsibilities and feel that they are making an impact by helping others. For example, the eco-leaders have planted trees, the playground buddies set up activities and the reading ambassadors help younger pupils.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their interests. Pupils look forward to the gardening, sewing, dancing and sports clubs. They learn to play musical instruments and perform at local music and dance festivals. Pupils collect funds and donations for charities they support. They are proud of their campaign to raise awareness about the impact of pollution on the environment. Pupils regularly organise litter picks to keep the area safe for local habitats.

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

The curriculum is interesting and vibrant in all subjects. The important knowledge and vocabulary pupils should learn have been carefully identified and ordered appropriately. The school identifies and supports the needs of pupils with special educational needs

and/or disabilities well. These pupils access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. This begins in early years and continues throughout the school.

Teachers set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour, and pupils demonstrate impeccable attitudes to learning. This means that classroom areas are calm, purposeful and productive. Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. They arrive on time and ready to learn. This is because staff work proactively with families to break down any barriers to attendance. Parents value and appreciate the proactive support provided.

The school promotes pupils' love of reading at every opportunity. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the diverse and interesting range of texts they read and enjoy. They cannot wait to discover new books available in classrooms and around the school. Younger children listen attentively to the rhymes and stories staff read and share. One pupil said, 'You can never get bored about reading here.'

Staff are determined that all pupils learn to read accurately and confidently. The sounds and letters pupils need to know well are introduced right from the start of Reception class. Staff check and make sure that the books pupils read help them practise the sounds they are taught. Many pupils learn to read quickly. At times, however, the teaching of phonics is not as precise as it could be. This means that a small number of pupils are not learning to read as fluently as they could.

Overall, teachers have strong subject knowledge. For example, in mathematics, they check and make sure that younger children develop their understanding of number securely. In the older year groups, teachers promptly identify and address any gaps and misconceptions that pupils might have. However, in a small number of subjects, teaching is not consistently effective. Sometimes, staff do not check pupils' understanding precisely and pupils' gaps in learning are not addressed effectively. Pupils are not routinely supported to make links with what they have learned previously. Consequently, they do not learn as well as they could.

The school works successfully to meet the needs of all pupils, no matter what their background or barriers in life. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are supported well in all areas of school life. The school provides many opportunities to broaden pupils' understanding of the world around them. For example, they take part in singing concerts and visit different cities such as London. Pupils learn about other faiths and the importance of not discriminating based on beliefs or for any other reason. They also know about different kinds of relationships, as well as how to keep themselves healthy and safe. As one pupil said, 'Just because we like someone does not mean that we follow everything they say, that is not love. We always make our own decisions.'

Staff are proud of their school. They appreciate the consideration that the school gives to their workload when changes are introduced. This helps staff to feel valued and supported in their roles. Governors are reflective and knowledgeable. They provide effective support and challenge to the school on the quality of education that all pupils receive.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Teaching in a few subjects is inconsistent. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should equip staff with the skills to check pupils' understanding and help pupils to make links with what they have learned previously so they integrate new knowledge into larger ideas.
- Sometimes, the teaching of phonics is variable. Some staff do not identify and address gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge effectively. This means that some of the younger pupils do not learn to read with sufficient fluency and confidence. The school should continue to ensure that all staff are well trained and teach phonics successfully.

## 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 March 2015.

## 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>	139770
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10296387
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	500
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Mitt Nathwani
<b>Headteacher</b>	Amanda Doy
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.willowcroft.org.uk">www.willowcroft.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school works collaboratively with three other primary schools. Together, they have formed the OPEN Umbrella Trust.
- The school is currently using three unregistered alternative provisions.

## 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and geography. For each deep dive, she held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders and teaching staff in the school. She met with the chair and vice-chair of governors.

The inspector also spoke on the telephone with senior staff from three of the unregistered alternative provisions.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- The inspector considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. She also considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through the staff survey.
- 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.

### **Inspection team**

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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