

Inspection of a good school: Willows Primary School

Victoria Road, Timperley, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 6PP

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 April 2024

Outcome

Willows Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this school and are overwhelmingly happy. They value the school's welcoming nature. Pupils shared that the best thing about the school is that they can be themselves. Everyone is treated fairly and with respect.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary during lessons and at social times. They strive to live up to the school's values of responsibility, challenge, self-belief and care. Pupils gave many examples of how they show these values in and out of school each day.

The school is ambitious for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils also have high aspirations for themselves. They make meaningful connections in their learning and build a secure body of knowledge over time. They are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Pupils understand how to manage their mental health and well-being. Pupils know about the importance of getting enough sleep and staying hydrated, as well as eating a balanced diet. They also know that they need something in their life to keep them happy. The school supports this with many clubs and additional activities, such as cooking, photography and yoga. Many pupils relish the chance to compete in sports tournaments, including football and cross-country. They are proud to represent their school.

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

The school has identified the important knowledge that it wants pupils to learn in each subject. Overall, learning is broken down and ordered logically so that pupils build their knowledge well. Staff provide regular opportunities for pupils to revisit the concepts that they have learned previously. Staff check if pupils have any gaps or misconceptions and are swift to address them. This ensures that pupils know and remember more over time. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well.

The school has prioritised early reading. Children in the Nursery class enjoy joining in with songs and rhymes. This prepares them well for learning phonics as soon as they enter the Reception class. Pupils practise reading using books that contain the sounds that they already know. Highly trained staff provide pupils with extra support if they need it. This helps these pupils to catch up quickly with their reading. Most pupils read fluently and accurately in readiness for key stage 2.

Reading is threaded through all that the school does. Texts and books are well chosen to support pupils' learning across the curriculum. Older pupils said that reading can 'expand your imagination and take you to another world'. Pupils value the school library. They appreciate the diverse range of books and authors on offer to them. Pupil librarians take responsibility to make this area inviting and welcoming for all. Most pupils, by the time they leave Year 6, develop into proficient readers.

Children in the early years enjoy learning about different festivals, such as the Lunar New Year. However, the curriculum in the early years does not clearly identify the most important things that children should know and learn over time. The school has not considered carefully how children's learning should build across the Nursery Year and into the Reception class. In addition, at times, the learning environment and resources are not used effectively to support children's learning. This results in children not being prepared well enough for their learning in Year 1.

Pupils with SEND are quickly identified by skilled staff. Purposeful and well-chosen interventions, such as sand and drawing therapy, support individual pupils in accessing the school's ambitious curriculum. Pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of school life and achieve well.

The school places high importance on getting to know pupils and their families well when they join the school. This is a particular strength for pupils who are new to the country and join the school at different points in the year. Pupils want to be in school each day. Attendance among pupils is high.

Pupils behave well. They enjoy lunchtimes with their friends. Pupils are extremely well mannered and polite. They are highly respectful to one another. Pupils are tolerant of the differences between themselves and others. They are proud of the diversity that exists in their community. Pupils celebrate each person's uniqueness.

The programme to promote pupils' wider development is carefully constructed. Pupils learn how to stay safe and could clearly articulate their knowledge on how to be safe when learning and playing online. They take on various leadership roles, such as well-being ambassadors and school councillors. Pupils raise money for local charities and help to plan events, such as a colour run and bake sales.

Staff feel fully supported. They appreciate that their workload and well-being are considered by the school before any changes are brought in. For example, the newly introduced assessment systems do not overburden staff. Governors understand their statutory duties and work exceptionally well with 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)

- In some areas of learning in the early years, the school has not identified the precise knowledge that children should learn. This means that staff do not prepare children as well as they should for their learning in key stage 1. The school should determine the knowledge that children should acquire in these areas of learning, so that children have solid foundations on which to build future learning.
- Occasionally, the activities that staff provide for children in the early years are not well chosen. This hinders some children from deepening their thinking skills in some areas of learning, which means that they do not learn as much as they could. The school should support staff to engage children in well-chosen activities that sustain children's thinking and deepen their knowledge and understanding.

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 October 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	106294
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10313981
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	367
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michaela Pashley
Headteacher	Kirsten Warren
Website	www.willowstimperley.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and religious education. For each deep dive, she held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- 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 reviewed a range of documents, including records of governing body meetings, the school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school and observed their behaviour at lunchtime. She considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. She considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Sue Dymond

His Majesty's Inspector

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