

# Inspection of a good school: Willowpark Primary Academy

Vulcan Street, Oldham, Greater Manchester OL1 4LJ

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 May 2024

## Outcome

Willowpark Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Louise Hayes. This school is part of the South Pennine Academies, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Lynda Johnson, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Lisa Fathers.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this school and described it as being kind and welcoming to all. The school's values of being respectful, responsible and resilient are shown daily through pupils' consideration and compassion towards each other and their approach to school life.

Strong, affirming relationships between pupils and adults makes sure that pupils feel safe and secure. They know that they are cared for and that there is always an adult available to help if they are worried about anything.

The school has high expectations of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many pupils join the school at different points of the year. Staff help new pupils to settle quickly, and most pupils achieve well. This is also true of children in the early years, who are well prepared for all that key stage 1 has to offer.

Pupils' behaviour is a strength. They conduct themselves very well around the school. Older pupils are quick to help younger ones. Pupils show maturity in the way that they play and socialise with each other during the well-organised breaktime activities.

The school prioritises high-quality personal development. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about 'elective Friday'. This is where they choose from a wide range of enrichment activities, including gardening, coding, cooking and various sports.

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

The school has designed an effective curriculum from the early years through to the end of key stage 2. This caters well for pupils' different needs, including the needs of the youngest children in the provision for two-year-olds.

In most subjects, the curriculum gives pupils the knowledge and understanding that they need to become self-assured learners. In these subjects, the school has thought carefully about the important content that pupils should learn and the order in which this should be taught. The school's approach to the curriculum ensures that most pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their education and for life in modern Britain.

However, the curriculum is still to be finalised in a small number of subjects. In these subjects, the school has not refined exactly what pupils should learn and when this subject content should be taught. This makes it more difficult for teachers to design learning that helps pupils to build on what they already know. At times, this hinders pupils from building a secure body of knowledge.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. They question pupils effectively to check their understanding and help pupils to remember important learning. Teachers use assessment information well in most subjects to establish what pupils know and where there might be gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This helps teachers to shape pupils' future learning.

The importance of reading radiates throughout this school. There is a rich range of books available for pupils to read and take home. The school encourages the enjoyment of reading in many ways. For example, older pupils are reading ambassadors and proudly listen to younger pupils reading. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the books they have read and the awards they receive for being eager readers.

Children in the early years, including those in the provision for two-year-olds, enjoy talking about the stories that they know. In Reception class, children learn letters and sounds through carefully crafted activities. Staff use their specialist knowledge of the teaching of early reading well. Most pupils are accomplished readers by the time that they leave for secondary school. Staff help pupils who find reading more difficult. Most quickly catch up with their peers and read confidently and fluently.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND well. This enables teachers to give these pupils the right help, to achieve well and build their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils with SEND achieve well. They participate fully in the same curriculum and opportunities as their peers.

Pupils are highly motivated to learn. They work hard during activities and listen to adults attentively. The school prioritises pupils' attendance and analyses any absence thoroughly. The school is mindful of the difficulties and barriers that families face to get pupils into school. However, the school's tenacious approach to getting pupils to attend school regularly has resulted in positive reductions in persistent absence.

The school has strong shared values and a commitment to nurture all aspects of pupils' personal development. It thoughtfully brings alive pupils' understanding of positive mental health, diversity, equality and the fundamental British values. Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences such as trips to museums, a residential trip and links with other schools. Pupils of all ages were visibly proud of their involvement in rehearsals for the school show.

The local academy board (LAB) and trustees share staff's ambition and commitment. Staff value the support that they receive for their well-being and workload. For example, staff spoke positively about the extra time they are given to carry out their curriculum and wider responsibilities. Staff are proud to work at 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 a small number of subjects, the school is still refining the essential knowledge that pupils must learn and in what order they should learn it. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could in these subjects. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking so that teachers have the information that they need to shape teaching and enable pupils to achieve well across the curriculum.

## **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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2019.

## **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>	144507
<b>Local authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10348363
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	234
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Lisa Fathers
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Lynda Johnson
<b>Principal</b>	Louise Hayes
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.willowparkacademy.org">www.willowparkacademy.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	26 and 27 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and a new chair of the board of trustees have been appointed.
- The school offers provision for two-year-old children.
- 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 that 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. She

spoke with pupils about their learning. The inspector also briefly discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.

- 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 spoke with pupils about school life.
- The inspector spoke with the principal, deputy principal and other senior leaders, including the SEND coordinator.
- The inspector held discussions with a range of school staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector met with members of the LAB, including the chair. She spoke to representatives of the board of trustees and to the acting chief executive officer for the trust.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to school improvement.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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