

Inspection of William Penn School

Brooks Green Road, Coolham, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 8GR

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

Overall effectiveness Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

William Penn School provides a kind and caring environment in which pupils learn to get on well together. They feel safe at school and know that adults will support them if they have any worries. Pupils value the school's small size and like the way that pupils of different ages mix. They appreciate the range of enrichment activities in addition to their lessons, such as the music workshops going on during the inspection.

The school is ambitious for all pupils to do well in their learning. It succeeds in some areas of its work, for example enabling pupils to get off to a good start in the early years and in their reading. However, pupils do not achieve well enough in some subjects across the curriculum by the time that they leave.

Pupils behave well around the school and get on well as a community. While many pupils work hard in lessons, some find it difficult to sustain their focus on learning. They do not make as much progress through the curriculum as they should and occasionally distract others. Any bullying is typically sorted out effectively by staff, showing the school's Quaker ethos of reflecting on one's behaviour in order to improve it.

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

Early years staff plan children's learning carefully to cover the required areas, building strong foundations in key areas like reading and number. The well-organised environment supports learning. Staff are adept at teaching new skills and setting out activities that encourage children to explore further the new aspects of learning.

Older pupils receive a well-planned curriculum in the core areas of mathematics and English, but the curriculum in some other subjects is not effective enough. Pupils' learning is not always sequenced well over time to build towards the ambition of the national curriculum. The school recognised the issue this year and has started to address it, but this is at the early stages. As a result, in some subjects, teachers are not routinely able to plan their teaching to ensure pupils learn the necessary skills or knowledge.

Teachers work hard to prepare their teaching. There is some highly effective practice in explaining new learning to pupils, notably in mathematics and English. Teachers select interesting tasks for pupils, such as using counting blocks in mathematics to reinforce learning. In these subjects, teachers understand pupils' achievement and often adapt their approaches to help pupils learn well. In some other subjects, teachers are not clear enough about the skills they want pupils to develop or the extent of pupils' learning. As a result, they are not able to adjust the support provided. The school identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. While activities are sometimes adapted well to support

these pupils, the lack of clarity about what pupils should learn in some subjects hinders this work.

The school ensures that pupils learn to read well. Phonics is taught consistently well, with training for all staff this year to develop their practice further. Support to help pupils to catch up is effective. Activities like 'Drop Everything and Read' and 'Hooked on Books', alongside a well-stocked library, mean pupils are keen readers.

Pupils receive good support for their wider personal development. Through the taught curriculum and enrichment activities, they develop respect for each other and understand right and wrong. They learn to reflect if they make mistakes. The school ensures all pupils benefit from trips and visits, supporting those from disadvantaged backgrounds where needed. Pupils like the opportunities to take on responsibilities, including the hotly contested but democratic way school councillors are elected.

The school has recognised that pupils' behaviour in class is not as good as it needs to be. In lessons, many pupils engage well with tasks, but a few do not. Staff do not consistently support all pupils to concentrate well, so some start to fidget and distract others. The school is drawing up a revised approach to managing behaviour but has yet to put it into practice. Attendance is below the national average. The school has worked effectively with some families this year and reduced the number of persistently absent pupils. However, more is required to raise overall attendance, including explaining more explicitly to parents the impact on learning if holidays are taken in term time.

The school has worked diligently this year during a period of interim leadership. Areas of strong practice, such as reading and safeguarding, have been sustained. Work has started on other areas, like the curriculum and attendance, where there are some concerns. Nevertheless, there is more to do. Parents are positive about the school, noting communication with them is effective. Staff feel well supported. They have received useful training this year, including through working with nearby schools. Support from the local authority has helped develop leaders' skills. The governors do a good job in supporting leaders and holding them to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The sequence of learning in some subjects is not planned clearly enough to build knowledge toward ambitious end points. This means teachers cannot provide activities that give pupils secure understanding and skills. The school should ensure that learning is sequenced well in all subjects.

- Teachers do not have comprehensive information in some subjects about pupils' achievement so as to adapt activities to meet their varying needs. This hampers pupils' learning, including for pupils with SEND. The school should make sure staff have accurate information about pupils' achievement and needs to adapt subsequent teaching effectively.
- Some pupils are missing out on learning through poor attendance. The school should increase its work with families where attendance is a concern. This should include ensuring parents are clear about the consequences of missed learning.
- Some pupils are not supported and enabled to sustain their focus on learning well enough in lessons, becoming distracted and sometimes distracting others. This slows the progress that they make through the curriculum. The school should ensure that staff have the skills and support to keep pupils on task.

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	126002
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10341622
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Matt Kerry
Headteacher	Stephen Kear
Website	www.williampenn.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has not been at work during this academic year and was not present during the inspection. The school has been led for the year by the deputy headteacher as acting headteacher.
- The chair of the governing body took up his role in March of this year.
- The school is much smaller than average. It is one of nine schools in England that has a Quaker foundation.
- Pupils are very largely of White British heritage, but there are increasing numbers of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils are from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.

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 the 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 had discussions with the acting headteacher, other senior staff, staff seen teaching, governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with an advisor working on behalf of the local authority. Other discussions were held with parents at the school gate.
- Inspectors visited lessons, met with pupils, observed the wider life of the school and reviewed the outcomes of surveys completed by parents, staff and pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, the inspectors took account of the views of leaders, spoke with staff and pupils, reviewed the single central record and considered how well the school has established an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. In each subject, inspectors met with school leaders and teachers of the subject, had discussions with pupils about their work and visited a range of lessons. Inspectors visited classrooms to see other subjects being taught.

Inspection team

Stephen Long, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Jackson	Ofsted Inspector

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