

Inspection of Willow Tree Community Primary School

Wetherby Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 7SG

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
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 Robert Mold. This school is part of Northern Star 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 (CEO), Jenn Plews, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Murphy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enthusiastic about their learning at this caring and supportive school. The school is highly inclusive. Staff work hard to understand the needs of each individual pupil.

The school sets high expectations for all pupils. The behaviour and rewards system centres around the values of being 'respectful, responsible, and ready to learn'. Pupils know these values well and take pride in being recognised for demonstrating them. Pupils behave well throughout the school. Clear routines are in place. Pupils move through the corridors in a calm and considerate manner.

Pupils achieve well across the curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils make particularly good progress with their reading throughout their time at Willow Tree. The attendance of some pupils is lower than leaders would like, and significantly below the national average.

Pupils learn about diversity and inclusion. They know how to stay safe online and in their communities. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage in education. In Nursery, children take part in pre-phonics activities. Across the early years the school places a high importance on developing children's independence. Children in Reception are well prepared for Year 1.

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

The school has made great strides in developing its curriculum over the past few years. Many subject leaders are new to their roles. The school has given them time to design the curriculum and to share their expectations with other members of staff. Leaders have carefully mapped out the knowledge that pupils need to learn and the order in which they should learn it. The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Teachers possess strong subject knowledge and choose effective activities to deliver the curriculum. They regularly revisit prior learning to reinforce pupils' understanding. Teachers consistently check pupils' progress and address any misconceptions. The curriculum's positive impact is evident in the high quality of pupils' work in subjects like art and design and mathematics. In some areas, where the curriculum is newer, its impact is still to be fully realised.

Reading plays a central role in the school. Children begin learning phonics early in Reception and move quickly through the programme. Phonics results at the end of Year 1 consistently exceed national averages. If a pupil falls behind, the school acts quickly, offering high-quality support to help them catch up. The school works hard to promote a love of reading. Pupils read for pleasure and enjoy author visits, which they talk about with excitement. Pupils thoroughly enjoy reading at this school.

The school accurately identifies pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND access all areas of school life, including trips and extra-curricular activities. Staff effectively make adaptations

to their lessons to ensure that pupils with SEND can access the learning. Pupils with SEND achieve well at this school.

In the early years, children experience positive interactions with each other and the adults around them. The inside and outside environments are purposeful and engaging. Emphasis is placed on the retelling of stories, collaborative work, exploration and experimentation. As a result, children progress well through the early years curriculum.

The attendance of pupils at the school is too low. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds attend school less than their peers. Leaders are aware of this and have recently launched a new attendance policy in response. The school is working relentlessly to try to improve attendance. However, the impact of this work has yet to be seen.

The school offers a wide range of opportunities to support pupils' personal development. Pupils regularly attend extra-curricular clubs such as sports, cross-stitch, and nature club. Student leaders, such as the school council and play leaders, make a positive impact on the school and local community. They frequently visit a local care home and raise money for charities.

Many leaders across the school are new to their roles, including some members of the local governing board. The school has taken time to develop these leaders and they are already having a positive impact in areas such as curriculum development. Some of these leaders require more training to ensure they have the skill and confidence to maximise their impact within their roles.

Trustees and established members of the local governing board have a strong oversight of the school. They have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas to still improve. Parents are positive about the school. Staff are happy and 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)

- The attendance of some pupils is too low, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. These pupils miss out on important learning. The school should work to reduce rates of absence and persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Many leaders across the school are new to their roles. This includes some members of the local governing board. Some of these leaders require more training to ensure that they have the skill and confidence to effectively fulfil their roles. The school should continue the development of leaders at all levels to ensure that the impact of the curriculum and other areas continue to be monitored and refined effectively.

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	148997
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10346804
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	446
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Murphy
CEO of the trust	Jenn Plews
Headteacher	Robert Mold
Website	willowtreeprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Willow Tree Community Primary School is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The school is part of the Northern Star Academies Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and the safeguarding and attendance leads.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography, computing and art. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 their work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at social times, at lesson change-over and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers and pupils about the school's programme of personal development.
- The lead inspector spoke with the CEO of the trust, members of the trust board including the chair of the trust, and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Chris Sergeant, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sam O'Brien

Ofsted Inspector

Rowena Sykes

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024