

Inspection of Willow Park School

Newbold-on-Avon RFC, Parkfield Road, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 1EZ

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 December 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Willow Park School welcomed its first pupils in January 2024 and is a place where everyone is valued. The school is highly ambitious for its pupils. Some pupils successfully show their achievements through a range of responses to books and songs. However, for other pupils, the school needs to support them further in achieving well. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and respectful. The school provides a safe and nurturing environment for the pupils.

There is a purposeful atmosphere around the school. At different times of the day, pupils can focus on some learning well. Pupils enjoy having stickers to celebrate success. Pupils love to fill the ball jar and receive rewards for their learning. Staff speak calmly with any pupil who loses concentration and offer support to help them regain focus effectively. Some pupils begin to develop their turn-taking skills. Pupils can communicate their feelings, including when they are happy or sad.

The school gives pupils opportunities to show their personalities and develop some understanding of each other. Some pupils have jobs around school such as tidying and switching on/off lights. Pupils' own interests are celebrated through playing and staff talking about what pupils enjoy about themselves and their toys.

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

The school has seen a significant increase in pupils from January to the time of the inspection. There have also been many changes in staff, including new staff joining as recently as November. These changes mean the school is still refining its curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs. The school has not ensured that the curriculum is taught consistently well. However, the school understands precisely what it needs to do to develop its effective curriculum further and support all pupils.

In some areas of learning, the curriculum maps out precisely the knowledge and skills pupils need to learn as they move through the school. This helps teachers to know what to teach and when to teach it. However, not all areas are as clearly sequenced as others. For example, the school has not yet put in place an effective curriculum for 'early number' in mathematics. Some of the pupils' learning opportunities are not as effectively planned and delivered as they could be.

The school acts promptly to ensure pupils' needs are identified and understood as soon as possible. However, this information is not used as effectively as it could be to inform decisions about the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some of the pupils' individual needs are not as precisely planned for as they could be. The school recognises the importance of reading to ensure pupils access the rest of the curriculum fully. Pupils begin learning phonics as soon as they join the school. However, there is not yet a sharp enough focus on early reading to ensure that all pupils learn to read accurately and with fluency. The school analyses trends in attendance effectively and provides additional support for the small number of pupils who do not attend regularly. It ensures that pupils

catch up on any work missed through absence. This support for pupils and their families is helping to improve attendance overall.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are at the heart of this school. There is an effectively planned and sequenced personal, social, health and economic curriculum. Pupils learn about themselves and their feelings. Pupils also develop an understanding of being 'a friend'. A recent visit to the local church helped develop pupils' awareness of the area and different buildings. Pupils celebrate each other's birthdays and what it means to be a 'special star'.

The school is determined to provide pupils with the best possible educational experience in a nurturing environment. School leaders, including the proprietors, continue to develop their school and are always looking for ways to improve pupils' learning. They understand how every pupil is an individual. However, the school has not ensured that it consistently meets all of the independent school standards.

Leaders have implemented a well-thought-out professional development programme. They ensure that the most recently recruited staff complete the most important training quickly. The school consults staff well on policy changes and considers their workload carefully, which staff appreciate.

The proprietor body has ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 as a suitable accessibility plan is in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's ambitious vision is not yet fully realised. Currently, there is an inconsistency between practice and expectation. As a result, not all pupils are achieving well enough. The school needs to ensure that staff have the knowledge and guidance they need to implement the curriculum consistently well.
- In some curriculum areas, the school has not identified or sequenced well enough the knowledge that it would like pupils to learn over time. As a result, staff do not have sufficient guidance about the most important content they need to teach and emphasise. The school needs to implement its plans to refine its curriculum well.
- The school has not yet fully embedded a sharp focus on supporting all pupils at the earliest stages of reading. As a result, some pupils do not develop their reading skills as rapidly as they could. The school should ensure that all staff who deliver and support phonics receive the right training to develop their expertise in this area and enable all pupils to get off to the best possible start in learning to read.

- Teaching does not consistently take enough account of pupils' individual needs. As a result, sometimes activities are not adapted well enough to reflect pupils' needs or build on and address gaps in their previous learning. The school needs to refine its approaches to assessment so that teaching can more effectively and consistently meet pupils' needs.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	149916
DfE registration number	937/6048
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10342209
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kimberley Preston and Oliver Preston
Headteacher	Kimberley Preston
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,000
Telephone number	01788 524683
Website	www.willowparkschool.warwickshire.sch.uk
Email address	kpreston@willowparkschool.warwickshire.sch.uk

Information about this school

- Willow Park School is an independent day school. It offers up to 20 places for pupils with SEND. This includes pupils with autism and pupils with speech, language and communication needs. All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. Currently, pupils are referred to the school from six local authorities.
- The school was first registered by the Department for Education in September 2023. This is the school's first standard inspection since it enrolled its first pupils in January 2024. New staff joined the school in September and November 2024 including a new classroom teacher and new teaching assistants.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is overseen by a headteacher who is also a proprietor and a director of the school.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

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

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, early reading, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. The inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. The inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders and staff; observed pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- The inspectors observed informal times of the day as part of their evaluation of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors held meetings with the proprietors who are also directors of the school, the headteacher and principal, teachers and support staff. The inspectors also talked informally to pupils, staff, parents and carers to gather information about school life.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils. They also considered parents' views.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. The lead inspector checked that the premises comply with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Stuart Clarkson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Madden

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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