

Inspection of a good school: Willow Primary School

Fernside Off Wexham Rd, Slough, Berkshire SL2 5FF

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 May 2021

Outcome

Willow Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The expectations of what every pupil at Willow can and will achieve are very high. Pupils work hard, knowing that every adult in the school wants the very best for them. Pupils are also taught to be considerate and resilient. Staff help pupils reflect sensitively upon any problems or concerns they might have. Pupils really value this help. One pupil described to an inspector how he 'never gives up' because he knows he must believe in himself.

Pupils feel very safe and happy. They know they are part of a school community where everyone is welcomed. Pupils are very proud of how diverse their school is. They are always keen to learn about each other's culture and beliefs. Pupils, parents and staff agree that bullying hardly ever happens. This is because pupils are kind and respectful to one another.

Leaders and staff provide many exciting opportunities that inspire pupils to find out more about the world around them. Pupils and parents hugely appreciate the range of trips on offer as well as the chance to take part in musical performances. Pupils are eager to share their many accomplishments, and to celebrate those of their friends, with visitors to their school.

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

The dedication of leaders reflects their ambition to ensure that Willow is 'more than a school'. They work tirelessly to understand the needs of pupils and their families. Relationships with their local community have only strengthened through the disruption caused by COVID-19 (coronavirus). Trustees and staff are rightly proud of the support they have offered to ensure that pupils have continued to learn and flourish.

This ambition can also be seen in the school's curriculum. Leaders have carefully considered what pupils need to know and understand as they move through the school. Previous results at the end of key stage 2 reflect the success of this work in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils continue to achieve very well in these subjects. Staff are now focused on ensuring that pupils' knowledge builds over time across the whole curriculum. Leaders are already implementing plans to address this to help strengthen pupils' skills in subjects such as art, music and geography.

Reading has a high priority in the school. Children learn how to read from the moment they join Reception. Well-trained staff work with pupils in small groups to develop pupils' phonic knowledge. This means that the majority of pupils can read words confidently and with accuracy. Daily support is put in place for any pupil who needs additional help because they find reading more difficult. Older pupils explore the books their teachers read with them with keen interest. These books have been thoughtfully chosen to ensure that pupils read a wide variety of different authors.

Leaders' vision of creating aspirational and resilient learners is evident throughout the school. Pupils are eager to ask and answer questions about their learning. Classrooms are focused places where lessons are rarely disrupted. This is also seen in the early years. In both Nursery and in Reception, children learn to play together through creative and imaginative activities. The well-resourced outside play area gives children the space to explore. As a result, children make a strong start to their schooling here.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well cared for in this inclusive school. Leaders use expertise from across their multi-academy trust to ensure that pupils' needs are quickly identified and support is put in place. There is an ongoing focus on helping pupils develop their speech and language skills. This is providing appropriate support for pupils with SEND as well as for the high number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Leaders and staff look beyond the school gates to find opportunities for pupils to learn about the world around them. There are numerous opportunities that nurture pupils' individual interests and talents. Sporting events, historical workshops and visiting musicians are eagerly anticipated and fondly remembered. The wide range of clubs on offer means there is something for everyone. This includes a Makaton choir, developing coding skills in computing or contemplating the universe in a star-gazing club.

Leaders provide their staff with high-quality training that they use daily in classrooms. Teachers benefit from working with colleagues across the multi-academy trust to continually make improvements to learning. Staff told us how much they valued this support as well as the care shown for their well-being. This has been particularly appreciated over the past year.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take their safeguarding role very seriously. All staff are well trained. They are vigilant and quickly report any concerns to the dedicated safeguarding team. Leaders work closely with families and other professionals to keep the most vulnerable children safe. Detailed records reflect this work.

There are many opportunities in the curriculum that help pupils learn how to stay safe. This is both in and out of school, as well as when pupils are online. Pupils value being able to add any concerns they may have into the 'worry boxes' and then explore these during their 'talk time' sessions.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum across the school is ambitious in its intent. It reflects leaders' determination to consider the needs of their pupils and to build knowledge over time. While the planning across the curriculum has been considered, it has not been fully implemented across some subjects. Teachers therefore do not yet have an accurate view of what pupils know and can do across the school's full curriculum. Leaders should carefully monitor the impact of their planned improvements to ensure that pupils' knowledge is secure in every subject.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2016.

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 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139198
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	10192862
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	472
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chairs of trust	Helen Okoro and Vivienne Turner
Headteacher	Gill Denham (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.marishacademytrust.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Willow Primary is one of two schools in a small multi-academy trust. One board of trustees oversees both schools.
- Pupils come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The school has a nursery for three-year-olds. Children attend part time.
- The school offers wraparound care for pupils before and after school. This is managed by school leaders and run by non-teaching members of staff.

Information about this inspection

- 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 met with senior leaders, staff, pupils and representatives from the board of trustees.

- Inspectors considered 25 responses to the confidential staff survey as well as 69 responses to the pupil survey. They also took account of 17 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including eight free-text comments.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors viewed the school's website and policies, met with the designated safeguarding leaders, spoke with pupils and staff, checked school records of safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with trustees.
- Inspectors did deep dives in reading, mathematics, geography and music. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils in Years 2 and 3 read.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation including the school's plans for improvement, reports on behaviour, records relating to pupil's safety and minutes of meetings of the board of trustees.

Inspection team

Aimee Floyd, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Leah Goulding

Ofsted Inspector

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