

Willow Primary School

Address: Fernside Off Wexham Rd, Slough, Berkshire, SL2 5FF

Unique reference number (URN): 139198

Inspection report: 21 April 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✔ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion sits at the heart of the school's work. Willow Primary is more than just a school; it is a pivotal hub for the community. Leaders have ensured that staff have the knowledge to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have a comprehensive understanding of pupils' needs and benefit from effective training. They use a range of strategies and adaptations consistently and effectively across the school. Staff support pupils well to reduce barriers to learning. The school's internal provision, the Willow Tree, strengthens this work.

The school has well-embedded strategies in place to assess pupils' learning and development. These are highly effective. Staff closely track and monitor the progress that pupils make, including pupils with SEND, those who are disadvantaged and those known or previously known to social care. Any pupils who require support benefit from timely and effective interventions. The school is proactive in working with parents and carers, securing the right support and using advice from external professionals.

Leaders ensure that staff are well informed about any needs or barriers to learning that pupils who are disadvantaged may have. They rigorously monitor their progress as well as the impact of strategies and training. Leaders use this information effectively to make decisions about the use of pupil premium funding. As a result, pupils with barriers to their learning achieve very well.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders place personal development at the heart of the school's work and go to great lengths to provide a rich and diverse programme. This goes beyond meeting statutory requirements: it enables pupils to thrive as confident, respectful and responsible individuals. The programme is deliberately designed to broaden pupils' experiences and deepen their cultural understanding.

Through the curriculum, pupils receive age-appropriate relationships education that gives them a secure understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships. They learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online, and can explain this clearly. Pupils have meaningful opportunities to discuss differences in faiths, cultures and family lives. They do so maturely, showing integrity and respect. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of fundamental British values and the protected characteristics. They apply this understanding in their daily interactions.

A wide range of opportunities beyond the curriculum further enhance pupils' personal development. Clubs, trips and enrichment activities help pupils to develop their interests and talents. Leaders track participation closely and remove barriers so that all pupils are included. Pupils particularly value the range of roles and responsibilities available to them, such as school council, wellbeing ambassadors and junior leaders, which prepare them well for later life.

Trips are regular, purposeful and carefully planned to enrich learning and provide memorable experiences. These are mapped through the pupil passports, ensuring that all pupils benefit. By the time pupils leave the school, they have experienced visits to places such as the theatre, museums, London and the seaside.

Highly effective pastoral support strengthens this work further. Staff know pupils and their families extremely well and are vigilant in identifying when additional support is needed. This ensures that pupils feel safe, valued and supported. As a result, pupils develop a strong sense of belonging, which underpins their wellbeing and readiness for future learning.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils achieve well overall. By the end of Year 6, pupils' outcomes in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics are above national averages. This is reflected in the high-quality work that pupils produce and the progress they make in these subjects.

Disadvantaged pupils' achievement is a particular strength, with outcomes in line with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Leaders' actions ensure that disadvantaged pupils have the essential knowledge they need to get off to a positive start in secondary school.

Leaders make sure that pupils build the phonics knowledge they need to become fluent readers by the end of key stage 1. In other subjects, pupils typically achieve well. In a few subjects, this is not always reflected in the work they produce and their responses. Typically, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective targeted support and make positive progress from their starting points.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a culture where pupils happily attend school. Overall attendance is close to or above national figures for all pupils and groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, persistent absence has consistently been too high. Positive relationships with families and leaders' systems are now helping to reduce individual pupils from being frequently absent. Leaders analyse attendance information carefully, identify barriers and use well-targeted strategies to support improvement. Their analysis enables them to carefully monitor the attendance of pupils in particular groups.

Pupils behave impeccably well in lessons and around the school without prompting. Staff model and apply well-established routines. There are consistently high expectations. As a result, the environment is calm, orderly and purposeful. Pupils are not distracted from their learning. Pupils are well-mannered, kind and respectful. They form positive relationships with staff and peers. They feel safe and know who to speak to if they have concerns. Pupils say that bullying is rare and is not tolerated. Leaders continually reflect and refine the

support they provide for pupils who need help to manage their behaviour. Productive partnership work with external agencies helps to inform this work.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders provide a broad, well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum that is rooted in the school's context. It includes the key knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. Leaders have an accurate understanding of how well the curriculum is implemented and use this to deploy staff and resources appropriately.

The school prioritises teaching pupils the foundational knowledge they need in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, in mathematics, pupils have access to a wide range of practical resources to support their learning. Staff prioritise phonics to help get pupils off to a secure start with reading. They give pupils frequent opportunities to practise so they become confident readers. Staff are skilled at teaching pupils how to read.

Lessons are generally taught well. Staff use questioning well. They routinely check pupils' understanding and typically identify any misconceptions. Pupils who need additional help, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive the support that they need. Teachers know pupils well and adapt teaching and resources so that pupils who face barriers can succeed.

Leaders recognise that, while the curriculum is well designed and taught, lesson activities could be refined further to provide additional opportunities for pupils to apply and build on prior learning, particularly in the wider curriculum.

Early years

Expected standard 

The early years is rightly prioritised by leaders. This ensures that children get off to a positive start. The curriculum is adapted to reflect the context and starting points of children, many of whom enter the setting with limited language and communication skills. As a result, all children, including those with barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing, make progress from their starting points. Children develop independence, learn to manage risk safely and are supported to make healthy choices.

From the provision for 3-year-olds onwards, children learn across all 7 areas of learning. The curriculum is clearly structured and sequenced, identifying the important knowledge and skills required for later learning. Appropriate emphasis is placed on communication and language, early reading and number as well as pencil grip. Reading is prioritised from the outset, with phonics introduced from Nursery effectively. Staff use assessment well to inform planning and make timely adjustments.

Staff establish secure routines and engage children in purposeful interactions that promote language development and social skills. Children benefit from well-resourced indoor and outdoor environments that support learning across all areas. Typically, staff identify and address misconceptions quickly.

Staff work closely with parents and external professionals to provide additional support for

children when needed. Care practices promote children's wellbeing effectively. Children feel safe, settled and happy.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's context, strengths and areas for development. They set a clear strategic direction, shared with those responsible for governance and well understood by staff. Leaders place pupils' best interests firmly at the centre of decision-making and prioritise actions that will have the greatest impact on pupils' experiences and outcomes. These priorities are appropriate and carefully chosen. For example, recent actions are beginning to reduce pupil absence.

Leaders act as role models, upholding high expectations, statutory duties and professional standards. They promote positive and respectful relationships across the school community and ensure that all pupils experience a broad and enriching curriculum that reflects the school's context. Leaders work effectively with the trust and local schools, contributing to wider improvement beyond their own setting. Resources are deployed thoughtfully to support pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Those responsible for governance are knowledgeable and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They provide an effective balance of support and challenge, monitoring progress closely and holding leaders to account for the quality of provision, including for disadvantaged pupils. Governors scrutinise spending carefully and understand its impact. They are also mindful of staff's and leaders' workload and wellbeing and take steps to support these.

Leaders ensure that staff benefit from high-quality, evidence-informed professional learning, including appropriate support for early career teachers. They manage workload sensitively so that staff feel valued and supported. As a result, staff morale is positive, and parents and carers report that leaders are approachable and that they are proud to be part of the school community.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils at Willow Primary School enjoy being part of a welcoming, inclusive community where they feel known, valued and cared for. The school's strong links with the local community and its clear commitment to being a 'school without walls' help pupils develop a genuine sense of belonging. Pupils celebrate difference, show respect for one another and are encouraged to be confident and aspirational.

Pupils behave very well. They are polite, articulate and welcoming to visitors. They consistently treat adults and their peers with kindness and respect. Clear routines and high expectations help pupils feel secure and ready to learn from the early years onwards. Pupils move sensibly around the school and show positive attitudes to learning. They say that they feel safe and bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Pupils enjoy their learning and are supported well to achieve. They typically make positive progress from their starting points. Staff work closely together to reduce barriers to learning and wellbeing effectively. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the same learning as their peers. Appropriate adaptations are carefully considered to help them succeed. High expectations across the school contribute to pupils' achievements. Ongoing work to strengthen the wider curriculum will enhance this further.

Pupils typically attend regularly, and absence rates are improving. Well-established routines for learning and behaviour begin in the early years and continue throughout the school. Beyond lessons, pupils benefit from a growing range of enrichment opportunities, including music, photography and sport. Many pupils take on leadership roles, developing confidence and independence. Trips and community events further enrich pupils' experiences. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education and for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that their work to support families and pupils leads to further reductions in rates of persistent absence for all pupils.
- Leaders should ensure lesson activities enable all pupils to build securely on prior learning and produce consistently high-quality work across the wider curriculum.

About this inspection

This school is part of Marish Academy 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), Gill Denham, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Vivienne Turner.

The chair of the local board of governors in this school is Vivienne Turner.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. They also met with members of the board of trustees, the local governing body, the governance professional as well as the CEO.

Inspectors spoke with several pupils, staff, parents and carers. They considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Lead inspector:

Stuart Bevan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:


Clare Haines, Ofsted Inspector

Gary Regan, Ofsted Inspector

Nic Browne, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

446

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

500

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

19.57%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.47%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.56%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	72%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	78%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	64%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	85%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	88%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	76%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	77%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	81%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	76%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	89%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	88%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	93%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	86%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	67%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	78%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	60%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	61%	44%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	78%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	72%	60%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	75%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	67%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	72%	58%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	84%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	83%	59%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	67%	68%	-1 pp
2024/25 (revised)	78%	69%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	60%	67%	-7 pp
2022/23 (final)	61%	66%	-5 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	78%	80%	-1 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	81%	3 pp
2023/24 (final)	80%	80%	0 pp
2022/23 (final)	72%	78%	-6 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	75%	78%	-3 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	78%	5 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	78%	-11 pp
2022/23 (final)	72%	77%	-5 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	84%	80%	5 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	81%	3 pp
2023/24 (final)	87%	79%	7 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	83%	79%	4 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.3%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	18.3%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	19.6%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	23.0%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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