

Inspection of a good school: Willaston Primary Academy

Derwent Close, Willaston, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6QQ

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 July 2023

Outcome

Willaston Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and happy in this harmonious school. Kindness is valued. For example, staff reward pupils when they spread kindness and happiness to others. On those rare occasions when unkindness or bullying occurs, leaders act swiftly and decisively to resolve it.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils, and children in the early years, strive to meet these. They delight in having their positive behaviour recognised by staff. Leaders ensure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive the support that they need to learn well. Pupils achieve highly.

Pupils learn that they can take actions to improve the lives of others. They are enthusiastic about taking on roles which enable them to do this. For example, older pupils act as 'buddies' to children in the early years, making sure that they have friends to play with at breaktime. 'Well-being wizards' lead assemblies where they talk to their peers about how to look after themselves, both physically and mentally.

Parents and carers appreciate feeling that they are part of a wider school community. They said that the staff know their children well and are always on hand to help. Pupils thrive in this school.

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

Leaders provide a curriculum that is ambitious and creative. Subject leaders have identified precisely the important information that pupils should acquire, from the Nursery class to Year 6. Early years staff have worked closely with subject leaders to ensure that children learn what they need to be well prepared for key stage 1.

Across the curriculum, teachers have secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They deliver the curriculum well. They pre-empt misconceptions to ensure that pupils gain

an accurate understanding of new concepts. In some subjects, particularly in mathematics and phonics, teachers carefully check that pupils know and remember what they have learned. However, in other subjects, they do not focus assessment strategies sharply on the important knowledge that pupils should remember. This means that teachers do not have sufficient oversight of what pupils have learned. Some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge, which teachers do not swiftly address.

In the recent past, leaders have strengthened their systems for identifying any additional needs that pupils may have. Leaders work closely with parents and external professionals to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the help that they need. Staff, including those in the early years, help these pupils effectively to follow the same curriculum as their classmates. Pupils with SEND learn well alongside their peers.

Leaders prioritise reading. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about weekly reading assemblies, where staff introduce them to a range of texts. Children in the early years enjoy 'mystery-reader' sessions in which their family members come into school to read to their class. Some older pupils who lack confidence in their reading get extra practise by reading stories to their younger peers. This helps them to develop their confidence and fosters positive relationships between pupils of different ages.

Children in the Nursery class enjoy a range of activities that promote recognition of sounds and letters. These help to get the children ready to learn phonics. Typically, staff teach the phonics programme well. They help pupils who struggle with their phonic knowledge to catch up. Pupils practise reading books that contain the sounds that they know. This helps them to develop into fluent readers.

Leaders encourage pupils to take pride in their local community. For instance, pupils spoke with great excitement about the local tradition of 'worm charming'. Leaders have also thought carefully about how to ensure that pupils learn about diversity, tolerance and respect. Pupils understand that they should treat everybody equally. Some are inspired to act where they perceive discrimination, for example, by writing letters to influential people. Staff prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Leaders provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils enjoy working together to build dens in 'forest club'. Leaders encourage pupils to participate in activities to develop their confidence and resilience. Pupils relish the challenge of participating in these experiences, such as performing in a band.

The atmosphere in the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils are attentive to staff. Pupils enjoy their learning and are eager to engage in their work. Learning is not usually disrupted by poor behaviour.

Trustees and governors work well together to ensure that leaders continue to refine the quality of education that they provide. Staff are very happy and proud to work at the school. They are appreciative of the consideration that leaders have for their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a caring community where staff know pupils well. This means that staff can quickly identify any changes in pupils' behaviour which might indicate a concern. Staff know what to do if they are worried that a pupil might be at risk of harm. Leaders are proactive in identifying risks and training staff to support pupils, for example, where their mental health is concerned. Leaders work with external agencies to secure timely help for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils learn about how to stay safe in a wide range of contexts. For example, they learn about how to behave safely around dogs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders do not ensure that teachers carefully check that pupils know and remember the intended curriculum content. This means that some pupils develop gaps in their learning without their teachers realising. Leaders should ensure that assessment strategies align closely with the knowledge specified in the curriculum, so that teachers can swiftly identify and address any learning that pupils have missed or misunderstood.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Willaston Primary School, to be good in September 2013.

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 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](#)' 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	142236
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10290295
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	268
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joanna Longman
Headteacher	Aaron Perrin
Website	www.willastonprimaryacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Chancery Multi Academy Trust.
- Leaders offer a breakfast club for pupils before school and an after-school club at the end of the school day.
- School leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other leaders.
- The inspector completed deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and modern foreign languages. She met with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed some samples of pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.
- The inspector observed some pupils reading to a familiar member of staff. She spoke with some pupils about their reading.

- The inspector checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including the school's single central record. She met with leaders, staff and pupils to check on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school.
- The inspector met with pupils to ask about their experience of school. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector met with groups of staff. She considered responses from staff to Ofsted's survey.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to attendance and school improvement.
- The inspector held a remote meeting with the chair of the trust and two other representatives of the trust.
- The inspector met with the chair of governors and with four other governors, one of whom joined the meeting remotely.
- The inspector spoke by telephone with representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector visited the breakfast club.

Inspection team

Sally Rix, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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