

Inspection of a good school: Willow Bank Junior School

Duffield Road, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire RG5 4RW

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

Willow Bank Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel very well supported at this happy and energetic school. They are taught how to work together and behave well. Pupils of all ages are proud of how kind their school is. They talk about how they help each other in class and that lessons are rewarding. Pupils delight in growing their understanding and knowledge.

Learning outside the classroom is highly valued and relished by pupils. They enjoy a very wide range of clubs and activities and are aware that these are the opportunities that enrich their lives. As one pupil commented, who started playing music in a school club, 'I hope to enjoy playing music for the rest of my life.' Leaders check that all pupils are able to take part in extra activities. They are ambitious for every pupil's development and learning.

Pupils believe that bullying is very unlikely at their school, but staff are ready to help if it were to happen. All adults use their knowledge and expertise to provide pupils with thoughtful guidance. Pupils describe feeling reassured by the range of pastoral support in place. Because of this, pupils feel safe and secure.

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

Pupils experience a school that is rich and vibrant. Leaders want pupils to learn as broad a curriculum as possible. In lessons, pupils are adept at applying the knowledge they have. This leads to them quickly making links between topics and contributes to pupils feeling fulfilled by their learning. While choice of activity and resources usually supports rapid learning, in a small number of cases, resources are less suitable. When this happens, pupils do not learn as much as they could.

Teachers and teaching assistants frequently check pupils' understanding and make sure any misunderstandings are addressed. Learning is designed to be flexible so that teachers can respond quickly if a pupil is unsure or cannot remember past learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are effectively supported, and

teaching is suitably ambitious for all pupils. If pupils fall behind, they are helped to catch up. Teachers know how to access additional in-school support if it is needed. Monitoring of the support given to pupils is in place but the newly appointed special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) plans to strengthen this further.

Pupils are passionate about reading. Teachers carefully choose books to help pupils explore a diverse range of people and places. Year 6 'Reading Buddies' take pride in helping others. Reading intervention is targeted to help weaker readers quickly improve. Pupils value this extra help and recognise that their improved reading skills lead them to enjoy reading more. One pupil commented that they now thought, 'Reading is like TV in your head, but better.'

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is good. Leaders deliberately teach pupils how to behave well. All teachers utilise the clear behaviour system in place. Pupils who find it more challenging to manage their behaviour get support. This helps them to understand both why good behaviour is important and to develop their own techniques to help them behave well. If necessary, leaders engage external agencies to provide specific guidance for individual pupils.

Out-of-class activities are viewed as equally important as more formal, classroom-based learning. Because of this, leaders make sure that all pupils have access to a very wide range of additional activities. These range from competing in sports teams to participating in clubs such as sewing and computer coding. Leaders have created an environment where all pupils are inspired and feel able to join clubs, regardless of their experience or aptitude. Pupils' confidence is grown through their representation of the school in sports teams, musical ensembles and in celebration events.

Weekly oracy, singing and celebration assemblies all help pupils develop a feeling of belonging to the school community. These events are used by leaders to talk about important issues and to teach pupils about equality, kindness and the schools' values.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff prioritise the safeguarding of pupils. Leaders ensure that adults are well trained. Staff receive regular updates about individual pupils, as well as a safeguarding newsletter that highlights any key information about potential safeguarding risks. Staff know what to look for and how to record concerns about pupils. Leaders refer to agencies when necessary and make sure all referrals are swiftly followed up.

Pupils are taught about personal safety, including when online. This includes working with representatives from the emergency services and children's charities. Pupils can describe how to identify positive relationships and what to do if they have concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some lessons, the activity choice does not support the rapid acquisition of the intended knowledge. This means pupils do not learn as much as they could. Leaders must ensure that curriculum planning in all subjects is sufficiently detailed to support teachers in their selection of activities and resources.
- The newly appointed SENDCo has not yet fully implemented plans to strengthen the monitoring of the interventions in place for pupils with SEND. This means that leaders cannot easily check if all support is as effective as possible in ensuring pupils with SEND achieve well. Leaders must make sure that all procedures to check that support is effective are in place as soon as possible.

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 school to be good in October 2012.

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](#)' 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	109890
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10241902
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ruth Jeffery
Headteacher	Annie Hanson
Website	www.willowbankjunior.com
Date of previous inspection	18 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team have been appointed since the last inspection.
- The school currently uses two unregistered alternative provisions.

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 the leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the SENDCo, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- The inspector met with five governors, including the chair of governors. He talked to a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to a sample

of pupils read.

- The inspector examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The inspector scrutinised safeguarding records, checked staff's safeguarding awareness and met with the designated safeguarding leads.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. He also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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