

Inspection of a good school: The Willows Primary School

Greatbatch Avenue, Penkhull, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 7JY

Inspection dates:

3–4 March 2020

Outcome

The Willows Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They thrive in this happy, energetic environment. Pupils are safe, well cared for and happy.

Pupils are incredibly polite. They behave very well both in lessons and around school.

The school motto of Explore, Dream, Discover is seen everywhere in school. Pupils talk about what they want to be in the future. Links with local businesses and professionals encourage pupils to think about the opportunities ahead of them. Leaders promote high aspirations for all pupils.

Pupils say that it is fun to be involved in so many different types of clubs and competitive sporting events. Pupils proudly represent their school at events across Stoke-on-Trent and further afield.

Pupils are kind and thoughtful. They are confident that teachers will take swift action if pupils are unkind. Pupils understand about different types of bullying.

Pupils across the school take on many different leadership roles. Pupils understand what it is to be an ambassador for their class and the school. They learn to listen and to see things from other people's viewpoints. One pupil summed it up when they said, 'At The Willows Primary, everyone's voice is heard.'

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

Governors know the school well. They ask questions and check that leaders are continuing to provide well for all pupils. At the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with the national expectations for their age as a result of a well-planned curriculum. In all classes, pupils' positive attitudes to learning allow lessons to run smoothly.

Reading has a very strong focus across the whole school. Children in early years get off to a flying start in reading. In Nursery and Reception, children make great gains in their phonics learning. Reading at home is rewarded and celebrated.

Staff enthusiastically promote a love of reading. In classes, reading areas are inviting, stimulating areas full of high-quality reading materials. Pupils enjoy the new class novels in key stage 2, which are sparking their interest to read other books by the same author. Pupils say that, by the time they leave, they want to have read the 'Stoke 100 Reads'.

Leaders for mathematics and science have put in place a curriculum that gets pupils thinking and exploring. Curriculum plans build on what pupils know and can do. Recent changes to the mathematics curriculum have strengthened learning. Staff are confident when teaching mathematics and pupils say that it is more practical and challenging than it used to be.

Pupils are proud to be successful mathematicians and scientists. During this inspection, for example, Year 6 pupils used seeds and different-sized pegs to investigate how the beaks of birds have adapted to enable them to survive and thrive. Well-organised practical activities such as this bring learning to life for pupils and help them to think like scientists.

In addition, whole-school events and celebration weeks engage the wider school community in scientific exploration. Parents and carers appreciate the school's annual science fair, when each class shares experiments with parents and carers and families. Whole-school fun experiments, such as the 'best biscuit to dunk', certainly capture everyone's imagination.

However, while science is exciting and engages pupils, leaders are less clear about how well pupils are doing as they move up through the school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. Pupils from the on-site hearing-impaired unit are successfully integrated into classes. Additional staff provide effective support for pupils. Parents are very supportive of the school and value its inclusive nature.

Leaders promote healthy lifestyles. This is evident from early years, when children ride bikes as part of their physical education (PE), to everyone completing a mile regularly. The school places great emphasis on pupils accessing different types of sports to engage the whole school community in keeping themselves healthy. PE leaders are focused on ensuring that all pupils access high-quality lessons in school. Good use is made of sports specialists who work alongside teaching staff to mentor and coach staff.

In early years, staff have created a warm, welcoming environment where children quickly learn simple routines. Behaviour is exemplary as children learn to move around the school calmly and quietly. Children listen carefully to their teachers. Parents value the great start children make in early years.

Staff are overwhelming positive about the support they have from leaders. They appreciate the training opportunities within the school and within the local community of schools. Staff say that leaders take their well-being very seriously. Staff appreciate what leaders do to ensure that their workload is reasonable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand their roles in keeping children safe. Training for staff is up to date. Staff receive regular updates on safeguarding. The safeguarding team knows the children well. Systems to support those who are the most vulnerable are rigorous and robust.

The headteacher makes sure that the right support is in place for each child. Parents say that leaders 'go the extra mile' for children.

Good links with partner organisations help pupils to know how to keep themselves safe in the local community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. However, in some subjects, such as science, leaders do not keep a close enough eye on how well pupils are doing. As a result, leaders cannot be sure that pupils are knowing more and remembering more. Senior leaders need to do more to evaluate the impact of the curriculum on building up what pupils know.

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 non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good/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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2010.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

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	123999
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10122584
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	690
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Fiona Weston
Headteacher	Sarah Thursfield
Website	www.willowsprimary.com
Date of previous inspection	8 June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased. The school is now a three-form-entry school from Reception to Year 6.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils who are hearing impaired on site.

Information about this inspection

- We carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science and PE. We met with leaders and curriculum leaders, considered work in books, conducted lesson visits with leaders, and spoke with teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with six members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- We met with the safeguarding leader. The school's single central record and other safeguarding records were checked.
- We observed pupils reading with staff.

- We spoke to parents at the end of the school day. We considered responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, and to Ofsted’s staff and pupil surveys.
- We gathered pupils’ views informally and formally during the school day, and read an email response.
- We considered documents provided by the school, including the school’s action plans, self-evaluation and curriculum documents. We checked attendance, behaviour information and the school’s website.

Inspection team

Pamela Matty, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Barry Yeardsley

Ofsted Inspector

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