

Willow Lane Community Primary School

Willow Lane, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 5PR

Inspection dates

14–15 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good or better. Teachers' planning does not always take account of what pupils already know, understand and can do.
- For some groups, teachers' expectations are too low, so too few of the most-able pupils reach the higher standards or greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Senior leaders are helping subject leaders to use information effectively to track and monitor progress in their areas of responsibility. However, this aspect of leadership is not embedded and, as a result, some subject leaders are not supporting pupils' progress as well as they could be.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now almost in line with the national average at the end of key stage 2. However, the progress that pupils make from their starting points is not consistently good in these subjects and across the wider curriculum.
- Teachers do not always insist that pupils work hard in all lessons and produce a sufficient amount of work. Pupils' work in topic books is frequently incomplete and there are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are passionate about improving their school. Their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. Their clear plans and decisive actions to develop the school are improving pupils' outcomes.
- The safeguarding of pupils is effective.
- The school provides good support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who are more vulnerable. These pupils make good progress.
- Provision in the early years is good, so children make good progress. Outcomes at the end of Reception are at least average over time.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they are really keen to learn. Pupils particularly appreciate the frequent opportunities for learning outdoors and for interesting trips and visits.
- Leaders have developed strong links with parents. These effectively support pupils' emotional and physical welfare as well as promoting their good attendance.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better, so that:
 - pupils make progress that is at least in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics across key stage 2
 - teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' prior learning across the full range of subjects and use this to plan effectively for pupils' good or better progress
 - all teachers have consistently high expectations of the amount and quality of pupils' work and ensure that there is always a suitable level of challenge in lessons for the most-able pupils.
- Ensure that subject leaders use assessment information effectively to support pupils' good or better progress in their individual areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and how it supports the local community. Senior leaders and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and are successfully taking decisive action to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Parents, staff and pupils rightly have confidence in the good leadership provided by the headteacher. The vast majority of parents would recommend this school to other families and believe that their children are well looked after.
- Leaders responded with urgency to the dip in pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics in the 2016 national tests at the end of Year 6. They made improving outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics the top priority. They introduced new strategies, supported by staff training and development, which resulted in pupils' accelerated progress in these subjects and improved outcomes in 2017.
- Leaders and governors know that progress across key stage 2 is still not rapid enough, particularly for the most-able pupils, and continue to drive improvements in the quality of teaching to rectify this.
- Leaders' deployment of those teachers who consistently demonstrate good and outstanding practice to support weaker teaching is proving successful. Additionally, the local authority provides effective professional development and training opportunities within the school and through links with other local schools. As a result, teaching is improving and there are secure plans in place to tackle the remaining weaknesses.
- Leaders' work to improve links with parents and engage them in their children's learning has been really successful. Attendance at parents' evenings and school events is high, and parents speak positively about their welcome in school and the willingness of staff to discuss any concerns.
- The special educational needs coordinator and her teaching assistant work very effectively as a team. Their good support for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities means these pupils make good progress and an increasing proportion of them are reaching age-related expectations across all year groups.
- Leaders and teachers make very good use of the school's extensive grounds to enrich pupils' experiences and build on their enthusiasm for learning. Additionally, pupils each have a Willow Lane Passport that details the wide range of experiences they can expect to have during their time in the school, including growing food in the allotment, sleeping in a tent and visiting London. All this promotes pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- Leaders of English, mathematics and science quickly turn around falling outcomes for pupils. Achievement improved in 2017 and the school's assessment information and pupils' work show that improvements are sustained and being built on successfully.
- Leaders of other subjects are either inexperienced or new to their roles. Consequently, they have yet to make a positive difference to pupils' progress in their subject areas. Subject leaders ensure there is adequate coverage of the full range of national curriculum subjects across the school. However, they do not ensure that teachers assess pupils' learning and use this information to plan lessons that will systematically

build on pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. This is why progress in subjects such as history and geography is uneven and not good enough overall.

Governance of the school

- Governors are very well informed about pupils' progress and the standards pupils reach in reading, writing and mathematics in comparison with national averages. Governors recognised the urgency of addressing the very low outcomes from the 2016 tests. They continue to focus sharply on the effectiveness of leaders' actions in driving up standards and accelerating pupils' progress.
- Governors are keen to ensure that there is always a good balance of expertise on the governing body and proactively seek to appoint new governors to fill any identified gaps. They are committed to the school, undertake training and development sessions, and provide strong challenge to the school's leaders.
- Governors ensure that the school gives good value for money and that decisions about spending are taken in the light of the main priorities for school improvement. They ensure that the pupil premium funding and special educational needs funding are carefully targeted at disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. These monies are used effectively so that the progress of these pupils is now accelerating.
- Governors make certain that the physical education (PE) and sport premium is used both to increase pupils' participation in physical activity and to support pupils' physical and emotional well-being.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Policies and procedures to ensure pupils' safety, including employment checks, are up to date and rigorously followed.
- Leaders and governors ensure that all staff receive appropriate training in child protection and understand what to do if they suspect that a child may be at risk of harm, including from radicalisation.
- The school site is well maintained. It provides a safe, nurturing and stimulating place where pupils can learn and play together.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving but is not consistently good in all year groups and subjects. This sometimes limits pupils' progress, including in reading, writing and mathematics across key stage 2.
- Where teaching is strong, lessons are well structured and build on pupils' prior learning. Progress is rapid because teachers have high expectations of the amount and quality of pupils' work. Lessons are interesting and stimulating and pupils respond by doing their very best.

- However, in some classes, teachers do not provide the right level of challenge for the most-able pupils. As a result, pupils sometimes repeat work unnecessarily or spend too long doing tasks that are not sufficiently demanding. Additionally, not all teachers have secure subject knowledge and occasionally make basic errors, for example when teaching punctuation.
- In key stages 1 and 2, teachers do not always build systematically on pupils' prior levels of skills, knowledge and understanding across the wider curriculum. This is because teachers do not have enough information about pupils' previous achievements to plan lessons with the right level of challenge to move pupils forward in their learning. In geography and history, for example, there is sometimes little difference between the level of work pupils are expected to complete in Year 2 and in Year 6, and progress is patchy.
- Pupils' written work in topic books is sometimes untidy or incomplete because not all teachers have high enough expectations of presentation and neat handwriting. Additionally, sometimes opportunities are missed for pupils to write for a range of purposes and at length. For example, pupils sometimes complete a worksheet with very little space for writing. This limits their ability to extend their learning through more complex responses to questions and is one of the reasons why the most-able pupils are not achieving as well as they should.
- Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils: class discussions are usually lively and pupils are keen to contribute their views.
- Pupils particularly enjoy learning related to solving real problems. For example, in a science lesson, pupils designed and built vehicles that would transport tomatoes down hills without damaging them. The purpose was to help Tibetan farmers who face this problem when taking their produce to markets some distance from their farms up in the mountains.
- Teaching of phonics is strong and is beginning to have a positive impact on improving standards in reading by the end of key stage 1. Teachers further support pupils in developing good reading skills by involving parents in book-sharing sessions and encouraging pupils to read widely at home as well as in school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe and secure in school. This is because staff are friendly, always willing to listen and help, and give lots of praise to build pupils' self-esteem and confidence as learners.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of British values. They show tolerance and respect for one another and for adults in the school. Pupils are aware of the need for rules and consequences. Annual elections for members of the school council help them understand how democracy operates in our society.

- Effective use of the PE and sport premium funding means that pupils have increased access to a range of sporting activities and events, both during and after the school day. This supports pupils well in learning how to keep themselves fit and healthy.
- Pupils say that there is very little bullying of any kind, and are confident that adults will always listen and intervene to put a stop to any unkind behaviour.
- Leaders ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe from harm, including when they are using the internet.
- Parents speak highly of the school's support. They particularly appreciate the school's warm and caring approach to pupils with SEN and/or disabilities and typically comment on the school's family atmosphere.
- The daily breakfast and after-school clubs offer further good support for pupils and their families.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils live up to the school's high expectations of their behaviour in lessons and as they move in and around the school. They say that teachers are always fair and that any consequences of poor behaviour are consistently applied. Disruption to lessons is extremely rare.
- The learning mentor's work with pupils and their families to encourage regular attendance is highly effective. Attendance is currently above average and has been so over time. Her work also has a very positive impact on supporting pupils' good emotional and physical welfare.
- Pupils are eager to learn and are very proud of their school. They welcome visitors courteously and enjoy taking on responsibilities, for example by running lunchtime clubs and activities.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Historically, progress across key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was not good enough and standards were well below average in the 2016 national tests. Standards improved, and in 2017 the proportion of pupils reaching age-related expectations was much closer to average. However, a lower-than-average proportion of the most-able pupils reached the higher standards, and pupils' progress from their starting points at the end of key stage 1 was not good enough. In part, this was because the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics was too variable in quality in key stage 2.
- In key stage 1, standards improved between 2016 and 2017, although the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching or exceeding the standards expected for their age remained below average.
- Inspection evidence gained from observing lessons and looking at work in pupils' books shows that the trend of improved standards by the end of key stages 1 and 2 has continued and progress is accelerating. Nonetheless, the proportion of pupils currently

in Years 2 and 6 working at a greater depth and reaching higher standards in their work is still too low and pupils' progress across key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is not consistently good.

- Across the wider curriculum, pupils' progress is slower than it should be because not all teachers have high enough expectations and systematically plan work that is sufficiently challenging to pupils.
- The difference in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching expected standards compared with others nationally has reduced due to the focused support they receive to catch up in their learning. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are most able and reach the higher standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2 is not high enough.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points as a consequence of tailored support for their individual needs. An increasing proportion of these pupils reach age-related expectations, indicating the effectiveness of the school's inclusive practice.
- Good teaching and provision in Reception means that children have a really good grasp of basic skills by the end of Reception and are well prepared to enter key stage 1.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is well above average owing to strong teaching in this subject.

Early years provision

Good

- Children's skill levels on entering Reception are typically lower than those found in children of a similar age nationally, particularly in relation to language and communication. Staff are very welcoming and children swiftly settle into the school's routines, learning to be kind to one another, share toys and listen carefully to instructions.
- By the end of Reception, the proportion of children reaching the standards expected for their age is at least average and has been so over time. This is due to good teaching and leaders' meticulous care for children's welfare from their earliest days in school.
- Children's experiences in early years help them learn how to take risks and yet keep themselves safe. For example, hatching chickens and helping to look after them showed children how to care for animals in a safe and healthy way.
- Strong partnership working with other schools and agencies contributes well to continuous improvements in practice in the early years. For example, the Lancashire early years team helped teachers to improve boys' writing.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum in Reception builds on children's interests. For instance, a recent topic based on the story of Jack and the Beanstalk particularly appealed to boys and supported them in developing their skills in language and communication.
- Occasionally, the activities in the outdoor area do not offer enough opportunities for children to continue their learning through playing, investigating and exploring.

School details

Unique reference number	119134
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10042479

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Nick Harrison
Headteacher	Mel MacKinnon
Telephone number	01524 65880
Website	www.willow.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	head@willow.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 March 2014

Information about this school

- Willow Lane is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language.
- The school provides daily breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all year groups.
- Inspectors talked with pupils about the school and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority. They also took account of 26 responses to the online staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day and took account of the 39 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation of its current performance, the school's most recent information on the attainment and progress of pupils, information relating to the safeguarding of pupils, and the school's most recent information relating to the attendance of pupils.

Inspection team

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