

Willow Tree Community Primary School

Wetherby Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 7SG

Inspection dates	4–5 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and managers have been successful in securing improvements, particularly in teaching. As a result, standards are rising.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able and those with special educational needs, are making good progress from their different starting points.
- Teaching is strong. Assessment information is used well to make sure pupils do not fall behind and to inform activities in lessons that move pupils on in their learning successfully.
- Morale among staff is high. They have readily embraced the changes in the school to ensure their pupils thrive during their time at Willow Tree.
- Pupils are safe and secure. Their behaviour is good, both in lessons and during lunchtimes and breaktimes. They say bullying is a rarity.
- The governing body provides plentiful expertise which both supports and challenges school leaders. The school is therefore well placed to continue its improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in the early years has not yet improved to the point where it is consistently good.
- Standards in key stage 1 need to rise further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the early years by:
 - raising expectations of what children can do and what they can achieve
 - ensuring that boys' achievement rises, particularly in reading, writing and speaking
 - using the pupil premium funding to make sure disadvantaged children achieve as well as they can.

- Raise achievement further for pupils in key stage 1 by:
 - ensuring that there is sufficient challenge, particularly for the most able
 - improving how pupils with weak reading skills are supported and how their progress in reading is checked.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- School leaders have worked hard on the key areas that required improvement at the last inspection, resulting in better teaching and improved rates of progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Turbulence in staffing has resulted in weaknesses in the early years provision which are now being addressed by leaders. The inspection team considered these weaknesses alongside the many improvements made, concluding that, on balance, the effectiveness of leadership and management is good.
- Middle leaders hold staff to account well, providing good guidance on how to improve teaching in their subjects and how to use achievement information well to identify where gaps in pupils' learning exist. Where there is occasional inconsistency in the quality of teaching, middle leaders provide suitable and timely support.
- The good curriculum is varied and supplemented well by visits and trips which make learning interesting for pupils. Science, geography and history are taught regularly in all year groups. Many pupils have instrumental music tuition. The curriculum for pupils who have special educational needs or disability enables them to make good progress alongside their peers. Phonics (how sounds relate to letters) is taught regularly in key stage 1. This is ensuring pupils make good progress in the development of their reading and writing skills.
- The school sports premium is used well to ensure staff have a set amount of training to improve their own skills. More pupils are now involved in physical activity than before because of opportunities being widened, such as opportunities for pupils with physical difficulties to take part in a greater range of sports. Better links with other schools have introduced new sports into the school, such as basketball and diving, which pupils thoroughly enjoy and achieve well in.
- Leaders have improved the way the government's additional funding (pupil premium) is used to benefit disadvantaged pupils. All disadvantaged pupils now have a 'passport' which indicates how the funding supports them as individuals and the difference it is making to their achievements. This is having a positive impact across the school except in the early years, where gaps in achievement remain.
- The school promotes equal opportunities well, for example by tracking the achievement of different groups of pupils to tackle any gaps that may emerge.
- The local authority's intensive work with the school has borne fruit. This is particularly evident in how well the school now tracks the achievement of different groups and how governance has improved. The local authority is aware that it now needs to turn its attention to supporting the school to improve provision in the early years so that it is as good as the rest of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - provides high levels of challenge. A well-organised system of linking governors with middle leaders ensures that governors are able to keep a close watch on areas of potential weakness in this large school
 - oversees the system for managing teachers' performance well, addressing any underperformance supportively and robustly when required
 - understands achievement data well, focusing on how pupils not only make expected progress but are supported to better this. The governing body has set the bar appropriately high
 - is provided with high-quality information from middle leaders to keep governors up to date with the achievement of pupils currently in the school
 - through governors' professional expertise, supports the school extremely well in relation to financial management and the safeguarding of pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The checks made on staff are thorough and checked regularly by a member of the governing body who has particular expertise in safeguarding. Staff are kept up to date well with new requirements, particularly on how to be vigilant for signs of extremism and radicalisation. Leaders have strengthened security around the site significantly since the last inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved because teachers use assessment information to make sure that work is neither too difficult nor too easy for pupils. However, in key stage 1, leaders know there is scope to push the most able further so they make even better progress. They are taking action to tackle this.

- In mathematics, the basics are taught well in key stage 1, and by the time pupils reach Year 6 they have a good grasp of these basics to enable them to solve problems mathematically. This prepares them well for the demands of secondary school.
- Writing is taught well so that pupils' writing skills develop successfully as they move through the school. In key stage 1, pupils form their letters well, progressing to writing simple sentences which become more complex as they continue into key stage 2, where pupils become confident writers, using a range of punctuation. Teachers pay good attention to improving pupils' spellings.
- Reading is taught every day. Teachers ensure the books pupils are reading are at an appropriate level of difficulty. The most able read suitably complex books and make good use of the library to read for pleasure. However, lower-ability readers do not make rapid progress because the support and feedback they receive is variable in quality.
- Teachers give good-quality feedback to pupils in line with the school's marking policy, which contributes to pupils' good progress.
- In the majority of lessons visited by the inspection team, the most able were challenged well. There was little 'dead time' where they were sitting waiting for others to catch up. Teachers were vigilant to their needs, constantly probing for better answers from these pupils. However, in key stage 1 this is not always the case.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that bullying, while it does occasionally happen, is dealt with quickly by staff. All pupils spoken to by inspectors said that they would feel comfortable confiding in an adult in the school if they were the victims of bullying.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe when using the internet and other electronic devices. When questioned by inspectors, pupils demonstrated that they understood these potential dangers and knew how to report any concerns, and to whom.
- Pupils understand how fundamental British values are relevant to their citizenship, for example by voting for 'digital leaders' whom they can call upon for support when using computers. They learn about life in multicultural Britain through, for example, participation in the school's 'Buddhist day'. These activities within the rich curriculum, alongside many sporting and artistic activities, contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were happy with the school's response to bullying and ensuring pupils are kept safe in the school.
- Attendance is broadly average and has improved over time for different groups of pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Inspectors were impressed by pupils' good manners and their respect for adults around the school. They wear their uniform proudly and are generous in lending their equipment to each other in lessons.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good around the school, a view that is endorsed by most parents responding to the Parent View questionnaire and by staff.
- In lessons, pupils are keen to work hard, do not interrupt each other and, in most lessons, listen well to the teacher as they give instructions or feedback to pupils. However, on the few occasions when pupils are not fully challenged, their attention drifts.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Standards over time have been rising. In 2015, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly average, having been below average in previous years. Year 6 pupils that left in 2015 had made reasonable progress, but the progress of disadvantaged pupils lagged behind that of others.
- Standards in the Year 1 phonics check were above the national average in 2015.

- These gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others had been a trend for some time in both key stages and in the early years. Inspectors focused on this key issue during the inspection.
- Inspection evidence indicates that standards are rising effectively in all subjects in both key stages. Faster progress is being made in key stage 2. Gaps in pupils' learning when they begin Year 1 result in a slow start to learning while pupils catch up with essential skills of using numbers, reading and writing. The consistently good teaching in key stage 2 contributes to pupils' rapid progress.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is now often equal to that of their peers. This is because the pupil premium 'passport' indicates clearly which areas the pupil needs to improve and acts as a helpful guide for parents, teachers and school leaders. The relentless drive by school leaders to address this key weakness has now paid dividends.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability receive a good package of support for their various needs. The school communicates well with their parents and involves pupils fully in discussing their progress and planned support. Consequently, they make good progress.
- The most able achieve well and reach high standards. Despite some lack of challenge in key stage 1 for the most able, school achievement data indicates that this group of pupils is achieving as well as others. Leaders know, however, that they need to achieve even higher standards.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Leadership of the early years is not yet good. Until recently, leaders have not taken decisive enough action to tackle weaknesses. For example, in 2014 and 2015, too few boys reached the expected levels of skill in reading, writing and speaking. This has been a barrier to boys' learning as they have progressed into Year 1. The proportion of boys who reached the expected level of skills in different areas of learning was below that of boys nationally.
- The early years pupil premium funding has not had a strong enough impact on narrowing the gap between the achievements of disadvantaged children and their peers. Overall, staff's expectations of what children can do have not been high enough so gaps have remained wide over time.
- Actions taken to improve matters are beginning to make their mark. For example, the quality of teaching is improving and, as a result, children in the Nursery class are now making greater strides in their learning.
- Overall, with the exception of girls and non-disadvantaged children, who generally achieve well, children make steady rather than good progress in their learning activities. This is partly because information staff have about children's achievements is not used as sharply as in the rest of the school to identify children's next steps so they always achieve their best.
- In the weaker teaching, teachers are not vigilant enough to notice, or take action, when boys shy away from activities that involve practising their writing, in favour of playing with cars or taking part in construction-based activities. This means there are fewer times for them to improve their writing skills.
- The outdoor area has been refreshed and has improved how literacy and numeracy play activities are developed outdoors. This is making a difference to children's development in these areas of learning as well as their enjoyment of more purposeful activities outside.
- Leaders have been vigilant in ensuring welfare requirements for the early years are met and in developing children's positive behaviour and attitudes to school. Children behave well, follow instructions and requests well and follow the class routines successfully. They enjoy their lessons and are eager to talk about what they are doing and what they have learned.
- Children are friendly and helpful. They learn to share activities and equipment with each other and consider each other's feelings to an age-appropriate level.

School details

Unique reference number	121424
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10011989

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	541
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Jane Beasley
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Davey
Telephone number	01423 883551
Website	www.willowtree.n-yorks.sch.uk
Email address	admin@willowtree.n-yorks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 February 2014

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional money provided by the government to support disadvantaged pupils) is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is similar to other schools around the country.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and so the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection, several staff have either joined or left the school.
- Support is being provided to the school by the Northern Light Teaching Alliance, mainly to support teachers who have recently qualified.
- The school website does not meet statutory requirements in relation to the information it provides on the curriculum across the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching across the school. They scrutinised pupils' books and listened to them read. A number of these activities were carried out alongside senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked with pupils both in meetings and around the school at lunchtimes and playtimes. They also held discussions with senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector spoke with two representatives from the local authority and with several members of the governing body.
- Various documents were scrutinised by the inspection team, including the school's checks on the quality of teaching, development planning, school policies and child protection records. Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector checked information on the school's website.
- Inspectors considered the 129 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View). Additionally various parents were met by an inspector at the start of the school day.
- The 32 staff responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were scrutinised by the inspection team, as were the results of a pupil questionnaire completed by 58 pupils of various ages.

Inspection team

Robert Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Keefe	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Wright	Ofsted Inspector

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