

Willow Primary School

Wrexham Road, Slough SL2 5FF

Inspection dates	21–22 June 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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection, the executive headteacher and other senior leaders have worked hard to bring about the improvements that were needed, particularly with regard to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors are effective at holding leaders to account. They have an accurate view of the school and are determined to continue to improve the outcomes of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is now good. Lessons are planned carefully to engage pupils' interest. Pupils make good progress from their starting points. By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are in line with the national average.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in the school. They have positive attitudes towards their learning.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils show great respect towards those from different cultures and religions.
- Attendance has improved considerably. It is now in line with the national average due to the effective work of leaders and governors.
- Pupils have good relationships with staff and feel confident that any concerns would be quickly addressed by their class teacher.
- The curriculum has been carefully designed to excite and motivate pupils. British values are effectively taught, and as a result, pupils have a good understanding of life in modern Britain.
- From low starting points, pupils make good progress in the early years. They are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes pupils in key stage 2, especially the most able, are not challenged sufficiently by the work that teachers set for them. This affects the progress pupils make.
- Some leaders do not have the skills needed to support teaching to become more outstanding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all pupils, especially the most able in key stage 2, consistently make the rapid progress of which they are capable by making sure that teachers provide work that fully challenges pupils in lessons.
- Improve leadership and management by developing leaders' skills in supporting teaching so that it becomes more outstanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Willow Primary School has made rapid improvements since the previous inspection. It is now a good school due to the dedication and effective actions of the executive headteacher and the senior leadership team. There has also been regular support from the other school in the academy trust. Leaders are determined to continue the improvements and have ambitious plans for the future.
- The school has an accurate system for monitoring pupils' learning. Skills are regularly assessed and staff are able to identify rapidly those pupils who are progressing well and those who need additional support.
- The curriculum promotes effective learning; it has been well designed to appeal to both boys and girls. Pupils study a range of interesting topics and often deepen their knowledge and understanding through homework assignments. Skills in English and mathematics are carefully developed across a range of subjects. For instance, in geography in Year 4, pupils drew graphs and wrote lengthy accounts about the water-cycle. The school has instilled in pupils a real fascination for science. Pupils spoke with delight about how much they enjoyed wearing an astronaut's suit. Modern foreign languages are carefully taught throughout the school, culminating in a residential trip to France for the older pupils. As a result of the well-developed curriculum, pupils are well prepared for studying a range of subjects in depth when they go on to secondary school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are well developed. Extra-curricular provision is plentiful and many pupils take part in the various sporting activities on offer. Some activities, such as henna painting, celebrate the different cultures within the school.
- The school has good links with a range of local employers, including Heathrow Airport. These enrich pupils' understanding of business and travel.
- The school effectively promotes British values. Pupils understand about the concept of democracy and have taken part in voting for the school's junior leaders. Pupils are also well aware that the decision about whether the United Kingdom stays in the European Union is through a national ballot. Pupils have a clear appreciation of other cultures and religions within the school and show tolerance and respect for all.
- The school makes very good use of the primary physical education and sports funding. The sports department works across both schools in the academy trust and is highly effective in encouraging all pupils to participate, whatever their ability. There have also been successes in winning tournaments, such as cricket and football competitions.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are able to access all the school has to offer. Pupils are supported in reading, writing and mathematics to ensure that they make good progress in their learning and continue to reach standards that are often higher than those of their peers.
- Many parents are happy with the school. However, a minority of parents expressed their concerns about communication with the school and the quality of teaching. Inspectors found that the quality of teaching is good. The school uses a variety of methods to communicate with parents and there are also well-advanced plans to improve the website to provide clearer guidance to parents, many of whom may speak English as an additional language.
- Leaders regularly visit lessons and give suggestions on how teaching can be improved. However, some do not yet have the skills to support teaching to become outstanding.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The highly professional governing body has been fully involved in monitoring the school's improvements and in holding leaders effectively to account.
 - Governors and senior leaders work closely together. They sometimes meet off site for a whole day so that they can carefully analyse any issues that are holding back pupils' progress. It was during one of these off-site days that the highly effective strategy to improve the attendance of pupils was formulated.
 - Governors ask probing questions and are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching across the school. They have a detailed understanding of the school's finances, including the school's use of additional funding for sports and pupil premium.
 - Governors often seek external validation of the school's effectiveness from highly experienced consultants. By this method, they ensure that the school is continuing to improve and that all leaders are suitably challenged.

- Governors are fully up to date with the procedures and policies for checking the suitability of staff.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff training is fully up to date and records are meticulous. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school. There are effective links with a range of outside agencies to ensure that all pupils are always safeguarded.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. This is because leaders now regularly monitor how teachers are supporting pupils' learning. Teachers are now accurate in understanding what pupils can and cannot do. As a result, pupils usually make good progress in all year groups.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. In mathematics lessons, teachers quickly identify if a pupil has a misconception and they then carefully explain how to rectify any errors. As a result, pupils' skills in mathematics, especially problem solving and reasoning, rapidly develop.
- Children develop their understanding of letters and the sounds they represent in the early years and key stage 1. Teachers help them to develop their skills further by helping them to read unfamiliar and difficult words. Pupils develop a love of reading and by Year 6, many are able to discuss their favourite authors and the types of books that they enjoy.
- The teaching of writing is effective. Pupils have many opportunities to plan, draft and edit their work to produce interesting accounts. For example, in Year 1, pupils drafted and edited the story of Cinderella. Their final pieces of work accurately retold the story and used punctuation and capital letters correctly.
- Pupils, especially those who are the most able in key stage 2, are sometimes not given work that challenges them enough. In some classes, they have to complete work that they find too easy before progressing to more demanding tasks. This affects their rates of progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Willow Primary is a happy environment where pupils are encouraged to show respect and care. For example, they show considerable kindness towards the school's rabbits that hop freely around the courtyard.
- There are effective arrangements in place for the pastoral care of pupils. The nurture group provides caring support and helps to build the confidence of those pupils who need additional assistance.
- Pupils have numerous opportunities to take responsibility and contribute towards the smooth running of the school. Those who are junior leaders are diligent in ensuring that there is no litter around the corridors and that behaviour is good.
- The school is effective in developing pupils' self-confidence. Older pupils enjoy acting as buddies and helping those in the younger year groups. During the inspection, pupils in Year 5 were seen to be developing their skills in public speaking when they wrote and delivered inspirational speeches to the rest of the class.
- Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to stay safe, including how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils also know about the dangers associated with roads and electricity.
- Pupils are very aware of the different forms of bullying. Whilst pupils say that there are rare incidents of bullying, they advise that teachers quickly and effectively deal with any problems.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is an orderly environment and staff have high expectations of behaviour. This was clearly shown during the inspection when pupils came in from breaktime silently from the playground into their classes.
- School records show that behaviour is good over time. Pupils say that the behaviour policy is very fair. In lessons, pupils usually display positive attitudes towards their learning and listen carefully when the teacher is talking. However, occasionally some pupils do not focus on the task in hand and their attention wanders.

- In the past, low rates of attendance affected the outcomes of pupils. To remedy this problem, leaders put in place a range of innovative strategies, including a free breakfast club and minibus transport each morning. Pupils are now very enthusiastic about attending regularly, and they appreciate the rewards they can gain such as cinema trips. As a result, attendance is now similar to the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection because leaders are relentless in their drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. As a result, standards are rising in all year groups.
- In both 2014 and 2015, pupils made good progress from their starting points. In writing last year, progress was significantly better than the national average.
- There was a slight dip in the Year 1 phonics screening check last year. However, as a result of swift action by leaders, information on current pupils in Year 1 is more positive. Almost all pupils are able to use their strong phonics (the sounds that letters represent) skills to make good progress in their reading.
- In 2015 at the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils who reached expected levels was similar to the national average. The proportion who reached the higher Level 3 was slightly better than the national average.
- Pupil's attainment in key stage 2 has improved since the previous inspection. Overall, the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics is similar to the national average. In 2015, Year 6 pupils made good progress from their significantly lower than average starting points.
- The progress of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. This is because their needs are quickly identified and support is then tailored carefully to meet their needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils in last year's Year 6 made good progress from their starting points. They exceeded their peers' achievements and reached higher standards of attainment in all subjects. In reading, for example, their attainment was nearly a year ahead of their classmates. This demonstrates that additional funding to close learning gaps has been very effectively used. Evidence in current pupils' books across all year groups showed that most disadvantaged pupils are performing well. In Years 2 and 3, disadvantaged pupils are attaining better than their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils are fully involved in the life of the school and are unhampered by any barriers to their learning.
- There are no marked differences in the progress of pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because of rich speaking and listening opportunities that are provided by both teachers and learning support assistants.
- In 2015, the proportion of most-able pupils who reached the higher Level 5 was below the national average in reading, writing, mathematics, and spelling, punctuation and grammar. Those who reached the highest level were above the national average in mathematics.
- Pupils are well prepared for their learning in secondary school. For example, in science, they demonstrate effective skills in conducting experiments, formulating hypotheses and thinking scientifically.

Early years provision

is good

- Most children start the school either in the Nursery class or the Reception classes with skills which are typically below those for their age, particularly in number, and language and communication.
- The majority of children speak English as an additional language. Effective teaching which constantly asks questions of children, and carefully develops their vocabulary, enables children to rapidly develop their speaking skills.
- Topics in both the Nursery and Reception classes are carefully chosen by leaders and teachers to spark the imagination. During the inspection, the topic on 'Pirate Pete' provided great enjoyment, and children were discovering lost treasure, making telescopes and re-enacting stories. These activities provided numerous opportunities for children to develop their skills in all areas of learning.
- Leaders and teachers have planned the outside area exceptionally well to cater for children's needs and interests. It is brimming with exciting activities, such as the gardening club and role-play areas. Children were seen to be fascinated using the minibeast investigation laboratory and they enjoyed using magnifying glasses to investigate the small beetles they had unearthed.

- Children in the early years behave well and treat each other with respect. They are carefully taught about the importance of taking turns and sharing.
- Parents are very positive about their children's experiences. They say that their children are happy and have made great strides since starting at the school. Parents feel fully involved in their children's learning and they enjoy sharing development milestones that children have achieved at home. Many parents said that they enjoy the weekly 'stay and play' sessions as these provide an opportunity for them to see how their child is learning in school.
- Leadership of the early years is strong. It is not outstanding because sometimes children's next steps in learning are not clearly identified and this affects their progress. Attainment has been rising since the previous inspection and the percentage of children who reach a good level of development is now similar to the national average. Children are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	139198
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	10009211

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	447
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Uzema Ahmad
Executive headteacher	Gill Denham
Telephone number	01753 551854
Website	www.willow.marishacademytrust.co.uk
Email address	officewillow@marishandwillow.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 March 2014

Information about this school

- Willow Primary is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The early years consists of a Nursery and two Reception classes. Children attend part time in the Nursery and full time in the Reception classes.
- Pupils come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. The largest ethnic group is Pakistani. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is similar to that found in most schools. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for those pupils eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Willow Primary became a sponsor-led academy in February 2013. The sponsor academy is called Marish Primary School and it is also situated in Slough. Both schools form the Marish Academy Trust. The executive headteacher and associate headteacher work across both schools to ensure strategic consistency. One governing body monitors both schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. There were 28 lessons and part-lessons visited, many of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, and inspectors looked at work in books and listened to some pupils reading. There were also informal discussions with pupils at breaktime regarding what it was like to be a pupil at this school.
- Inspectors took account of 25 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and also spoke to parents at the end of the school day. School parental surveys were also examined.
- The views expressed by members of staff in 70 online questionnaires were considered.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation and policies, including the school improvement plan. Information about the performance of the school in comparison with other schools nationally was considered along with documents about pupils' current attainment and progress. Documents checking the quality of teaching and learning and records relating to behaviour, attendance, child protection and safeguarding were also examined.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Crouch	Ofsted Inspector
Susannah Rolfe	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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