

Windhill21

Windhill, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 2NE

Inspection dates

24–25 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The inspirational headteacher is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. Together they have firmly established a culture of high expectations and a vision of excellence that is shared by staff and governors.
- Leaders throughout the school have used their enthusiasm and determination to raise standards and outcomes for pupils. They contribute equally to the improvements made.
- All staff receive highly effective training and support. This has enhanced their skills and knowledge to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning very effectively.
- Leaders ensure that there is a rich, stimulating curriculum both within and beyond the school day that meets pupils' needs exceptionally well.
- As a result of thorough planning, innovative teaching and accurate assessment, pupils are actively engaged in their learning and consequently make outstanding progress.
- Safeguarding takes high priority. Procedures for ensuring that pupils are kept safe are very thorough. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and their parents agreed.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They take responsibility for their learning and for jobs around the school. They take very good care of themselves and others.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. This is evident in the high-quality discussions pupils have in lessons on global and moral issues. This prepares pupils very effectively for life in modern Britain.
- Children get off to a superb start in the outstanding early years provision. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes learn quickly, often from low starting points. Highly skilled staff plan exciting learning activities both indoors and outside.
- Parents hold the school and leaders in extremely high regard. The tremendous volume of written and verbal praise received during the inspection was overwhelmingly positive.
- Governors have a diverse set of skills and expertise which enables them to challenge and support leaders very effectively about many aspects of the school's performance. However, they have not yet done so with sufficient rigour in relation to pupils' outcomes across subjects other than English and mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen governors' understanding of pupils' outcomes beyond English and mathematics, so that they can hold leaders more stringently to account for pupils' achievement across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher share a relentless determination to ensure the best possible outcomes for all pupils who attend Windhill21.
- Senior leaders have developed a remarkable sense of teamwork across the school. All staff share leaders' commitment to improving the quality of teaching and to providing a curriculum that excites and engages pupils, while promoting their wider personal and social development. As a result, pupils make excellent progress and acquire exemplary learning habits.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is exceptional. Every aspect of teaching and learning is reviewed to ensure that the school is providing all pupils, whatever their ability, with the best possible education. Equally, this ensures that agreed systems and approaches are applied consistently throughout the school.
- There is distributed leadership across the school. Leaders at all levels undertake detailed evaluations of their areas of responsibility and devise targeted action plans to improve and develop the quality of education across the school. Leaders value the support and training they receive to help them to develop their leadership skills.
- Highly bespoke training and support are provided to help teachers and teaching assistants improve their practice. Staff appreciate the opportunities they have to develop professionally, and continually seek to improve their teaching. Staff observe colleagues, discuss the quality of teaching regularly and routinely share ideas about what works well with each other. Consequently, teaching and learning are of the highest quality and continue to improve.
- Staff greatly enjoy working at Windhill21 and recognise the consideration that leaders give to their workload. For example, through Ofsted's online survey, staff commented that streamlining the school's approach to marking pupils' work has 'freed us up to plan more effective and engaging lessons'.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils to meet pupils' specific needs. Pupils' academic, social and emotional needs are quickly identified, and a range of support is provided. As a result of the carefully matched support, disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are making good or better progress across the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make very strong progress from their starting points. This is because the effective special needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that additional funding is spent on intervention and resources that make the most difference to pupils' outcomes. As a result, the needs of these pupils are met successfully.
- Leaders ensure that the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding is well used. For example, teachers have regular opportunities to develop their skills in teaching PE, including working alongside specialist teachers. In addition, pupils participate in a wide range of sports and competitions, including hockey, football, tag rugby, archery, netball, gymnastics and athletics. As a result, pupils' physical skills are well developed,

and they have a good understanding of the importance of sport and exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle.

- Pupils enjoy a highly engaging curriculum that enables a range of subjects to be studied in meaningful and relevant contexts. For example, the Year 2 topic entitled 'Fire fire!' enables pupils to explore aspects of geography, history and art in a cohesive manner. Pupils' emotional and social development is also promoted well through a range of activities and assemblies. Extra-curricular experiences, including trips and residential opportunities, enhance pupils' self-confidence.
- Leaders ensure that pupils become well-informed young citizens. Pupils are encouraged to think deeply, discuss and debate events of global and moral importance. For example, pupils in Year 4 were observed constructing reasoned arguments around whether to give money to homeless people. During the discussion, the teacher very skilfully supported pupils to distinguish between fact and opinion.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of, and positive about, the school. One parent, summarising the views of many, stated: 'Windhill21 has an exceptionally high standard of teachers and support staff across the board. This translates into a challenging, interesting, nurturing environment for my child.' Parents also recognise how the school helps their children to be well-rounded citizens of the future. One parent commented: 'Windhill21 is a brilliant school that not only focuses on the academic but puts a lot of emphasis on the development of my children's mental and emotional well-being. The school also aims to spark their interest in a wide range of areas that will hopefully help them develop into mature, well-adjusted, lifelong learners.'
- Leaders are outward-looking and visit other effective schools to find ways to raise standards further and improve the achievement of pupils. They also receive effective challenge and support from an external consultant. The school is involved in training future teachers and plays a part in improving the wider education system by, for example, sharing the school's many examples of outstanding practice with other schools.

Governance of the school

- Governors share the vision and ambition for pupils to experience an outstanding education and develop all-round skills for life. They bring a wide range of expertise to their roles. Governors hold school leaders to account for standards of teaching and behaviour. Governors ensure that their own skills and knowledge are up to date by attending relevant training, including on safeguarding.
- Additional funding is spent to the best effect. For example, governors make sure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make the same substantial progress from their starting points as others in school and at least as well as other pupils nationally.
- Governors gather a wide range of information about the school. Their regular visits; analysis of assessment information for reading, writing and mathematics; and insightful reports from leaders and discussions with pupils mean that governors have an accurate and in-depth knowledge of almost all aspects of the school's work. While this is the case, governors do not yet have a clear understanding of pupils' achievements in subjects other than English and mathematics and so do not hold leaders fully to account for this aspect of the school's performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders carry out extremely rigorous checks to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers working in the school. Led by the effective family worker, any concerns over pupils' safety and welfare are pursued swiftly and documented thoroughly.
- Safeguarding training for all staff and governors is extensive and up to date. This enables them to identify the signs and symptoms that suggest a child may be at risk of harm quickly and confidently.
- Leaders and staff have a good understanding of local issues within the community, and work well with external agencies so that they can support pupils and their families effectively.
- Governors provide additional checks on safeguarding practice. They check recruitment records and talk to pupils and staff about safeguarding issues. Pupils told inspectors that they feel very safe in school and 'can always tell a grown-up if we have a worry'. Almost all parents agree that their children are safe and well looked after.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- There is exceptionally skilful teaching across the whole school. Teachers routinely plan interesting lessons that enable pupils to make strong progress. Teachers regularly ask probing questions that help pupils to deepen their learning, justify their ideas and clarify their thinking. As a result, pupils' learning is moved forward continually.
- The relationship between teachers and pupils is excellent. High-quality teaching engages and stimulates pupils' interests. Consequently, pupils' learning behaviours are outstanding. They have a desire to learn, they work hard and waste no time in lessons. Even the youngest children show confidence and maturity in their learning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge across the curriculum is exceptional. Teachers use technical vocabulary accurately; there are many examples of pupils using and applying this vocabulary within their work. Opportunities to apply reading, writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum are many and varied. Teachers have equally high expectations of pupils' reading, writing and mathematical work in all subjects, not just in English and mathematics.
- Teaching assistants make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning. They support learning skilfully, ensuring that positive attitudes and behaviour for learning are maintained. Small-group work outside the classroom is targeted and teaching assistants have a very good understanding of pupils' needs. As a result, pupils make strong progress in these groups.
- Teachers know in detail where every pupil is in their learning. Assessment systems are used to very good effect to pinpoint the next steps in learning. Teachers' planning is matched to the needs of all pupils. Teachers regularly and quickly adjust their planning when needed to ensure that pupils' learning is taken forward.
- Pupils regularly review and assess their own work during lessons. They are taught from a very early age to reflect and consider what they have done, and how to improve it.

Pupils' skills at improving their own work are well developed and are supporting them to make substantial progress.

- Teachers have high expectations of all pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils are taught specifically how to become resilient learners and are, therefore, not afraid of any challenge they are presented with. Pupils have remarkably high expectations of themselves. They not only rise to the challenge of the teaching, but also seek out ways to challenge themselves.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. All staff use correct sounds and leaders ensure that the phonics teaching is consistently good across the school. Teachers take any opportunities to make links with phonics in pupils' other learning. For example, children in a Reception class were observed using their phonics knowledge to write a menu for their café, and instructions for preparing their fruit snacks.
- As pupils get older, teachers encourage them to read widely across a range of genres. A recently introduced approach to teaching comprehension enables pupils to develop focused questioning and thinking skills, such as retrieving and interpreting to analyse the meaning of texts.
- Teachers give pupils many opportunities to write in a range of different styles and at length. The teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling is highly effective. Stimulating activities are planned to spark pupils' interest, and meaningful links are made in topics to develop pupils' learning further. For example, in Year 6, high-quality discussions around a series of pictures depicting the First World War led to some effective 'letters home' from soldiers to their families. Consequently, strong progress in writing can be seen across the school.
- Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving and reasoning activities. Pupils can articulate their learning clearly, using correct mathematical vocabulary. Pupils' basic mathematical skills are very secure, which enables them to reason at a high level.
- Exceptionally well-planned work on developing language and vocabulary ensures that pupils are confident speakers by the time they reach Year 6 and can debate issues convincingly, but respectfully. The 'global goals' threaded through the curriculum teach pupils to consider a range of environmental topics. For example, pupils reflected on the issues around the use of plastic products in their lives. They told inspectors that it is important 'not to be a bystander' and their concern led them to challenge the school's lunch provider to reduce the amount of plastic packaging used for their school meals.
- Homework supports and develops learning across the curriculum. Workshops for parents and blogs on the school's website help parents to understand how to support their children effectively with learning at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and take great pride in their work. Pupils talk confidently about the school's 'secret agents' which describe the

characteristics to help them learn. They can also explain how they use these to improve their learning. For example, pupils told inspectors that 'agent communicator' helps them to 'listen to other people's ideas because we learn better when we share'. Likewise, 'agent perseverance' reminds pupils 'not to give up – it's the key to success'.

- Pupils appreciate the hard work of their teachers and teaching assistants, who they describe as 'energetic and enthusiastic'. Pupils told inspectors that their teachers 'are passionate about our learning. They really want us to succeed.' One pupil added, 'They push us to our limits in a good way.' Pupils are clearly proud of their school. They describe it as being a place where they have 'the freedom to follow our interests' and where 'it's so great it seems like you're not even learning – just having fun!'
- Pupils are taught to be resilient in their learning from a very early age. As a result, they are not afraid to try new things and tackle challenging work and they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities such as being equality champions, librarians, eco-warriors and head pupils. These roles contribute to the decision-making processes in the school and improve learning for other pupils. For example, the equality champions evaluated how accessible different parts of the school were and where improvements could be made. This information was fed back to senior leaders for their consideration.
- Through a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education, pupils learn to stay safe in a range of situations. They feel safe at school and know how to stay safe online when using a computer.
- Pupils say that bullying does not happen in their school and they 'know not to do it'. However, pupils also say that there is always someone they can speak to if bullying were to happen.
- Pupils told inspectors that diversity and difference are celebrated at Windhill21: 'It's a fair place because we are all treated the same. Our school works well for everyone. It includes all people.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Teachers set high expectations and encourage positive behaviours from the early years onwards. Pupils work very well together and discuss their thoughts in pairs and groups to develop ideas and improve the quality of their work.
- Pupils demonstrate impeccable behaviour across the whole school. This includes at breaktimes, in the dining hall and moving around school, as well as in lessons. For example, during a lunch break a group of pupils were seen eagerly washing up and clearing the area for their friends to use.
- All areas of school are calm and well ordered, and pupils need minimal supervision to manage their behaviour. The vast majority of pupils are able to regulate their own behaviour to an exceptional level. No time is wasted in lessons. Pupils move without any fuss from the playground to classrooms and between lessons.
- Attendance is improving. This is largely due to the family worker, who is tenacious in following up absence. As a result, attendance is now above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Published results and the school's own assessment information show that pupils in all year groups are making substantial progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2017 and 2018, the proportions of pupils who attained the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 were above national averages. This means that pupils leave Windhill21 very well equipped for the next stage of their education.
- Given pupils' often low starting points in Reception, their progress and achievements throughout the school are all the more impressive.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national phonics check at the end of Year 1 is well above the national average. The school's assessment information demonstrates that pupils are making better progress in developing and using their understanding of phonics throughout the school. This is because phonics is taught systematically, and pupils use their phonics skills accurately when they read books.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make excellent progress. This is because their needs are quickly identified by staff and they are effectively supported in their learning. Several parents told inspectors that they were pleased with the way that the school helps their children to succeed.
- Disadvantaged pupils make substantial progress because teachers have an in-depth knowledge of their individual needs and very high expectations of what they can achieve. In 2018, at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils achieved at least in line with other pupils nationally, and often outperformed them in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Most-able pupils achieve very well in their learning. This is because of teachers' consistently high expectations and because of their own aspirations for future success.
- Pupils read widely and often. They develop a rich vocabulary and understand the power that language can have in writing and verbal debate.
- Writing in books is of a very high quality. There is a wide range of evidence of pupils writing at length and in a range of different styles. Grammar, punctuation and spelling are applied correctly in pupils' writing. Writing across the curriculum is particularly strong. At least good progress can be seen in every year group and, in a number of classes, outstanding progress can be seen.
- Pupils' work in books shows that progress in mathematics is at least good, with many examples of pupils making outstanding progress. This is as a result of teachers' high expectations and the excellent teaching of mathematical problem-solving and reasoning across the school. Pupils have very secure basic mathematical skills.
- There is strong progress across the curriculum because of the outstanding teaching. The school's assessment information and work in books show that pupils are making at least good progress across all subjects. Pupils' achievement is assessed in all subjects and this enables leaders to identify and eradicate any underachievement.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- One of the assistant headteachers, who is also the early years leader, provides exceptionally strong leadership. All staff in early years are dedicated practitioners and continually seek ways to ensure that children have the best possible learning experiences. There is a shared vision to ensure the best possible outcomes for all children.
- The leader's evaluation of the provision is detailed and incisive. Action plans are precise and identify clearly how the provision will be further improved. Staff receive regular training to improve their practice. A high priority is placed on professional development. Staff work with other settings to moderate work and share best practice.
- The foundations for successful learning are embedded in the Nursery. There is a calm, purposeful environment where three-year-olds are taught to play together, for example through careful modelling and demonstration by well-skilled adults. The school's focus on developing language and vocabulary starts here. Staff model rich language for children to follow and copy. As a result, children who have previously been reluctant to speak become more confident to have a go.
- Provision in the Reception classes builds on the earlier success. Staff plan stimulating and exciting learning experiences in both the inside and outdoor learning environments. Children are busy and engaged. Staff assess in great detail what children can do, and then precisely match the learning activities to children's needs and interests. Every opportunity is taken to move children's learning forward. The questioning used by staff to help children learn is of a very high quality.
- Behaviour across early years is exemplary. Well-established routines are in place. Children know what is expected of them and show a high level of respect to all adults. They follow instructions quickly and sensibly. Children are confident and independent learners. They quickly develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, one child arriving at the snack table pointed to the hand gel and explained, 'That makes sure our hands are clean, we use it and then we can eat!'
- Strong partnerships exist between staff and parents. Parents contribute to children's learning journeys and have close communication with staff. All staff welcome parental involvement. Staff work closely with parents when children start school, including carrying out home visits, to help children settle quickly.
- Throughout the early years, the correct staffing ratios and qualifications are maintained, all welfare requirements are fully met, and safeguarding practices are secure.
- From starting points that are well below those found typically for their age, an increasing proportion of children achieve a good level of development that is now in line with the national average. As a result of the outstanding teaching, all groups of children, including the most able, make very good progress from their starting points. Children are very well prepared socially, emotionally and academically for Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	141851
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10053411

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	478
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Naomi Holloway
Headteacher	Philippa Moore
Telephone number	01279 696850
Website	www.windhill.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@windhill.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2018

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The school became a stand-alone academy in April 2015 and the sole member of the Windhill Academy Trust. The board of trustees is the accountable body.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English.
- The proportion of pupils who receive SEN support and the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan are broadly in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in every class. Some of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or assistant headteachers.
- A wide range of pupils' workbooks were examined by inspectors throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the SENCo, a group of subject leaders, the PE leader, the newly and recently qualified teachers, the trainee teacher, the business manager and the family worker. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. In addition, the lead inspector had a telephone conversation with an external consultant who provides support and challenge to the school's leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in class, and around the school at break and lunchtimes, to seek their views about the school. Meetings were also held with three different groups of pupils more formally to discuss their learning and many aspects of school life. One inspector attended a whole-school assembly.
- Some pupils were heard reading their books. Inspectors also talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including: assessment information; minutes from governing body meetings; reports from external consultants; the school's own evaluation; improvement plans; and records about behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 256 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, 170 responses to the Ofsted free-text system, and emails sent to the lead inspector. Inspectors also spoke to some parents during the inspection. Additionally, inspectors took account of the 29 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the 177 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Adrian Lyons	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Adkins	Ofsted Inspector

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