

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Willows Primary School

Church Road, Basildon, Essex SS14 2EX

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 February 2025

Outcome

The Willows Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Tom Robinson. This school is part of Berlesduna Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sean Tobin, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Robin Taverner.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like coming to this welcoming school. Staff take the time to talk to pupils about their feelings. Pupils are confident that if they have a worry, they can speak to an adult who will listen and help them. This helps pupils to feel happy and valued. The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils work hard and achieve well across the curriculum. For example, children in the Nursery Year excitedly use magnets to identify which materials are magnetic. In Year 2, pupils eagerly share, in detail, what they know about the Great Fire of London.

Classrooms are calm places to learn. Teachers expect pupils to behave well, which they do. Outside the classroom, pupils move around sensibly and play cooperatively together. Pupils are polite to their classmates, staff and visitors.

There are a range of opportunities for pupils to take on roles of responsibility. For example, anti-bullying ambassadors look out for pupils who might need someone to play with. These opportunities help pupils to develop the school's values of respect and courage.

Pupils learn about the importance of fairness and individual rights. They practise democracy by voting for their classmates to become school councillors. These experiences help to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

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

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Children start learning to read as soon as they join the Reception Year. In the Nursery Year, children learn to identify sounds through rhymes and stories. This helps prepare children for learning to read in the Reception Year. Pupils visit the school library. Teachers regularly read aloud to pupils. These experiences help pupils to develop a love of reading.

Staff teach early reading effectively and consistently. Pupils are given regular opportunities to practise the sounds and letters that they have been taught. Books are matched to the sounds pupils know. This helps them to read with increasing fluency and confidence. Pupils who find reading difficult, including some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), quickly receive effective support to help them keep up.

The school makes sure that pupils receive a broad curriculum. In most subjects, the school has identified the important knowledge and skills that pupils are to be taught from the early years through to Year 6. The curriculum is designed to enable pupils to build on their previous learning. For example, pupils in the Reception Year can recognise amounts up to 10 without counting. This is because they have been taught what each number is made up of.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. For instance, Year 6 pupils can solve multi-step algebraic equations because teachers have broken down each step of working into manageable chunks of learning. However, sometimes, teaching staff do not check what pupils, including those with SEND, know effectively enough. This means that on occasion, misconceptions are not addressed. Therefore, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge.

The school has in place appropriate processes to identify pupils with SEND early on in their school careers. The school works with the various nursery settings to make sure that provision is in place right from when children start school in the Reception Year. The school works effectively with external professionals. These include speech and language therapists who provide staff with good advice and support.

Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. The curriculum is typically taught without interruption. Pupils who need more help managing their feelings and behaviour receive effective support.

Attendance remains a priority for the school. The school effectively supports families to identify and remove barriers to regular attendance. The school takes appropriate action to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

The school places great importance on pupils' wider development. Teachers help pupils to value and celebrate difference. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to develop their talents and pursue their interests. They compete successfully against their peers from other schools in the trust, and beyond, in tag rugby, football and running events. These competitive experiences promote the importance of fairness and teamwork. The school

offers a wide variety of clubs, including film, gardening, and mindfulness club. These are well attended and broaden pupils' experiences.

Pupils are taught the importance of looking after their environment. Eco-ambassadors suggested that classes create one whole class card instead of giving individual Christmas cards.

Trustees have high expectations for the school. They have appropriate processes in place to check the school's effectiveness. The trust and school leaders have identified the necessary steps to make the school better. Staff appreciate the actions taken by the school and trust leaders to improve their practice and manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teaching staff do not check what pupils know and correct misconceptions well enough. This means that some pupils, including some with pupils with SEND have gaps in their learning and are not as well prepared as they could be for learning new content. The school should ensure that teaching staff check what pupils know with precision and address misconceptions quickly, so that all pupils achieve well.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in June 2019.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143206
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10345450
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	657
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robert Taverner
CEO of the trust	Sean Tobin
Headteacher	Tom Robinson
Website	www.willows.essex.sch.uk
Date of the previous inspection	26 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Berlesduna Academy Trust, which consists of ten schools.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- An inspector held meetings with the senior leadership team.

- An inspector met with representatives of the central trust team, a member of the board of trustees and the CEO of the trust.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to pupils' wider development and behaviour and attendance. The inspectors also met with groups of staff and pupils to discuss these aspects of the school's work.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The views of parents and staff were also considered, including through Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Deborah Walters, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ania Vaughan

Ofsted Inspector

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