

Windermere Primary School

Windermere Avenue, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 5QP

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2018

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher is a strong leader. She has established an effective leadership team to continue to drive further improvement.
- Leaders have created a culture of high expectation. As a result, pupils receive a consistently good standard of education.
- Leaders are accurate in their evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They identify the right priorities to continue to improve.
- Governors know the school well and strike a happy balance between support and challenge. They are effective in holding leaders to account for how well pupils are doing.
- Leaders have taken swift and effective action to improve the teaching of reading, which is now taught well. Consequently, pupils are now making stronger progress than in previous years.
- Pupils show positive attitudes in lessons and around the school. Their behaviour is good and often exemplary.
- Teachers use assessment information well to plan work at the right level. This means that most pupils receive a good level of challenge and make strong progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Adults know pupils very well, which results in pupils' social and emotional needs being met. Leaders have created a nurturing and caring school, with a real 'family feel'.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years class. Provision is good and children thrive in the rich and stimulating environment.
- Although attendance has improved because of the effective actions leaders have taken, there are still a number of pupils who are persistently absent and miss too much time at school.
- Assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics is not yet well developed and embedded. Therefore, leaders are not as knowledgeable about how well pupils are doing in these subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders, including those responsible for the wider curriculum subjects, should ensure that the rigour in assessment found in English and mathematics is applied to all other subjects.
- Improve attendance by building on the successful work already undertaken, with even more rigour, to ensure that the small number of pupils who are still persistently absent attend well.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, and deputy headteacher, have successfully instilled a culture of high expectation. They both strive to ensure that the school does the very best for each individual pupil. Staff are proud to be members of the school community and all said that the school is well led and managed.
- Leaders have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They meticulously analysed the reasons for the underperformance in reading in 2017 and took appropriate action to make improvements. Consequently, pupils' outcomes in reading are now good. Plans for future improvement focus on the right priorities.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. Leaders know the barriers faced by these pupils and have in place strategies to support them. These plans focus not only on academic progress, but also on social and emotional development. As a result of this work, disadvantaged pupils are well supported and subsequently make good progress.
- Leaders ensure that the physical education and sport premium is spent well. Pupils have access to a wide range of clubs, including lacrosse, hockey, cross-country and netball. Pupils have the opportunity to meet world-class athletes, giving them role models to aspire to. For example, the school hockey team recently had a coaching session from an Olympic gold medallist. Consequently, participation levels are high.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, which is carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils. For example, the school's 'learning together weeks' provide pupils with the chance to work alongside one another to learn through exploration and investigation. These opportunities allow pupils of different ages to work together, developing social skills effectively.
- The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. Values, such as democracy and tolerance, are taught and promoted through the school. For example, the school's weekly 'circle time' ensures that pupils have a voice on important topics. As a result of these activities, pupils are being well prepared for a life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use professional development very well to improve teaching. Teachers new to the profession were positive about the support they receive from leaders. The deputy headteacher provides comprehensive training for middle leaders to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to lead their area of responsibility well. Consequently, there is ever-growing capacity to continue to improve the school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They said that the school is well led and managed, and they spoke highly of teachers. One parent told inspectors, 'My son has gone from strength to strength and I have been struck by the strong community nature of the school.'
- Leaders rightly identify that increasing the rigour of assessment of the wider curriculum is likely to ensure that pupils make even stronger progress in subjects such as geography, history and art.

- The local authority has provided effective support to the school. Local authority advisers make regular visits to check leaders' evaluation of the school and to provide professional development for teachers, especially those new to their role of leading a subject area.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, because they make regular visits to evaluate what is working, and what needs to improve. They offer effective support for leaders, but do not shy away from challenging when needed. For example, they challenged leaders robustly over the 2017 key stage 2 reading outcomes.
- Governors actively recruit new members to make sure that there is a wide range of skills on the governing body. They evaluate their effectiveness and seek training opportunities where needed. Several governors recently attended training on analysing assessment information, to ensure that they had a full understanding of this important aspect.
- Governors make sure that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is well spent and challenge leaders to make sure that this group of pupils receives the support they need.
- The governors hold leaders to account for safeguarding very effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture of vigilance. Staff, at all levels, know their pupils well and report any concerns they have promptly and accurately using the school's chosen electronic system.
- The designated leads for safeguarding are all well trained. They keep detailed records of any concerns and make referrals to outside agencies if this is needed. They follow up these referrals with great tenacity to make sure that vulnerable pupils receive the support they need.
- The single central record of the suitability of staff meets all statutory requirements, and pre-employment checks on staff are carried out thoroughly. This ensures that all adults are suitable to work with children and pupils.
- Pupils are safe in school and their parents and carers agreed. Pupils know who to speak to if they have a problem and are confident that adults will help them.
- Governors make regular visits to the school to check on how effective safeguarding is. They know that the school is meeting all statutory requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of their pupils. This means that pupils work hard in lessons, have positive attitudes towards learning and subsequently make strong progress over time.

- Teachers use English and mathematics assessment well to plan work that meets the needs of the majority of pupils. Teachers are skilled at using questions to challenge pupils further. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils were able to extend their reasoning skills because of precise questions from the teacher.
- The teaching of mathematics is good across the school. This is because there is a consistent approach in every class. Mathematical language is used effectively and pupils are confident and able to represent problems in a range of different ways. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils could show inspectors several different ways to represent doubling and halving.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching of reading. Reading is now taught well across the school. This is because pupils have access to more demanding texts, questions adults ask ensure that pupils have to think deeply, and pupils have the skills to discuss and debate their ideas.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and well trained. They offer good support to the pupils they work with, some of whom are pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Adults ask the right question at the appropriate time to help pupils think for themselves and grapple with new concepts.
- The relatively new 'home learning logs' provide effective opportunities for pupils to continue their learning outside of school. Pupils now take pride in their home learning, which has not always been the case.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Adults know the pupils extremely well. Leaders place equal weight on pupils' social and emotional development as they do on their academic performance. As a result, guidance and support are highly effective in meeting pupils' needs.
- Pupils support one another in class and can collaborate well. They build and maintain very good relationships with each other. One pupil told an inspector that the school has a 'family feel'. Parents agreed, with one saying, 'Windermere is an incredibly nurturing and caring school.'
- Pupils know how to stay safe online and are aware of who they should, and should not, communicate with online. Pupils said that they are confident that staff will listen to them if they have a concern.
- Pupils know about bullying and the different forms it takes. Although they have a good understanding of bullying, pupils said that it is very rare.
- Pupils are taught to value the successes and differences in others. Every week, pupils nominate a 'child of the week'. For example, during the inspection, pupils had to put forward a classmate who had shown the ability to bounce back or keep going when things went wrong. Pupils are rightly proud to be chosen and they also get enjoyment from selecting others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils display positive attitudes in lessons and around the school. Their behaviour is often exemplary. One pupil told an inspector, 'It's a small school with a big heart and everyone gets along with everyone.' Pupils are polite to one another and to adults.
- Pupils' conduct at breaktime and lunchtime is good. Pupils of different ages play together well and older pupils are caring and supportive towards younger pupils.
- Leaders have taken very effective action to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence rates. They have worked tirelessly to address attendance issues. Leaders produced compelling evidence and striking examples of improvement in attendance for specific pupils.
- Despite this improvement in attendance, there are a small number of pupils who still regularly miss school and are disadvantaged by their low attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017, although progress and attainment in writing were well above the national averages, progress and attainment in reading were well below. This meant that not enough pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to address the underperformance in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. As a result, current pupils are making stronger progress in reading across the school. Now that the teaching of reading is of a high quality, these low outcomes in 2017 are on course to improve considerably in 2018.
- In both key stage 1 and key stage 2, pupils make strong progress in writing. High standards of writing are seen in subjects other than English. For example, in science, Year 6 pupils used their good knowledge of explanation texts to write an explanation of how the human circulatory system works.
- In 2017, the attainment in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils in Year 2 was above average. Current pupils in key stage 1 continue to make strong progress and achieve well in these subjects.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points. This is because they are supported well through a range of specific interventions which are precisely planned to meet their needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because they are provided with effective support and challenge. Where academic progress is slower for some of these pupils, social and emotional needs are a barrier. Leaders quickly identify these barriers and put in place specific intervention to help pupils to overcome them.
- Phonics outcomes in key stage 1 are strong, because phonics is taught very well. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national figure and has been rising over time.

- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects across the curriculum. They make rapid gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in science because they have regular opportunities to carry out practical investigations to deepen their understanding of scientific concepts.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the school with starting points that are typical for their age. They go on to make strong progress because of the rich and stimulating environment and good teaching in the early years.
- Adults work extremely well together, planning exciting learning activities for children. Many of these are in response to children's interests and build upon their previous knowledge. Additional adults are effective because their interactions with children challenge the most able and support those who find learning difficult.
- Children's behaviour is good and they show respect for one another and their environment. This is because adults have set high expectations which children respond well to.
- The relatively new early years leader has quickly identified the strengths and areas for development in the provision. She has been well supported by senior leaders, and the local authority, and is well placed to continue to drive improvement in this area of the school.
- Parents contribute to their children's learning through the school's chosen online 'learning journey'. Parents are well informed about their child's progress and value the extra support that staff provide. One parent told an inspector, 'My son has been well supported when he needed extra help with his phonics – issues were identified quickly and he is now progressing well.'
- Children who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress because their needs are well met by adults.
- Inspectors observed a Reception 'sharing assembly'. Children shared, with great enthusiasm, their recent learning. They could speak with confidence to the whole school, staff and parents.
- Despite being a well-used space, the outdoor area lacks the resources for children to be as independent as they are inside. The early years leader has identified this and already has plans in place to make improvements.

School details

Unique reference number	117217
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10041793

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Perry
Headteacher	Davina Raftery
Telephone number	01727 853360
Website	www.windermere.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@windermere.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- In 2017, the school met government floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a series of lesson observations and learning walks across all classes and in different subjects in order to inform judgements about teaching, learning and assessment. The majority of these were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors assessed the quality of pupils' work by scrutinising a range of written work in subjects across the curriculum. Inspectors also heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other leaders, a group of governors, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, information on pupils' achievement, records of the school's safeguarding arrangements and records of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke to parents in the playground at the start of the inspection. Account was also taken of the 59 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 33 staff responses to their online questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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