

Willoughby Primary School

Address: Church Lane, Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE12 6SS

Unique reference number (URN): 122681

Inspection report: 14 April 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Mostly, pupils secure the essential knowledge that they need. This reflects the improvements made in the curriculum and teaching. Pupils' achievement in mathematics has risen and the proportion of pupils passing the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national average. The security of pupils' phonics knowledge is evident in their confidence with writing. Any gaps in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics knowledge tend to close quickly through effective support. As a result, pupils generally leave the school well prepared for their next steps, achieving outcomes in line with their peers nationally.

Overall, pupils gain a suitable understanding across the school's ambitious curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils, or those with barriers to learning, achieve typically in line with their peers. Sometimes, a few pupils do not gain a secure understanding and they find it difficult to demonstrate and explain what they have learned. They build less successfully on their knowledge due to the curriculum and teaching not reflecting their age-related needs or starting points in a few places.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise and promote good habits of regular and punctual attendance, which parents and carers equally value and support. This is reflected in high attendance rates for most pupils and very low rates of persistent absence. Leaders monitor attendance closely, particularly for the very few pupils who do not attend as regularly or punctually as they should. They work with families to identify the causes. When necessary, leaders provide personalised support for pupils. As a result, dips in attendance rates recover quickly.

Rightly, leaders have raised the expectations of pupils' behaviour. Working collaboratively with staff, they established a clear and supportive behaviour policy that staff apply consistently overall. Leaders designed routines and the structure of the day carefully to maximise learning time. Pupils have a voice in defining the rewards they receive for demonstrating positive behaviours. They behave well. Pupils understand and follow the school's expectations and routines successfully. Staff make sensitive adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This enables pupils to learn in a calm and purposeful environment. Mostly, pupils show positive attitudes in lessons and focus on their learning. Pupils understand what bullying means and know that, on the rare occasions that concerns arise, staff will deal with those concerns swiftly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have worked diligently to design an ambitious curriculum. This curriculum enables pupils to develop secure foundations in reading, writing and mathematics and builds their knowledge across subjects. Leaders have considered the needs of mixed-age classes carefully and creatively. They continue to refine the curriculum. However, in a few aspects they have not defined precisely enough the knowledge that different year groups should learn. This hinders staff from building pupils' knowledge successfully, based on what they have learned before.

Leaders provide staff with appropriate training to teach the curriculum well. Subsequently, staff use a range of effective strategies to help pupils learn. For example, they model using specific vocabulary to explain new learning. Staff ensure that pupils regularly revisit their prior learning to help them remember it. They generally check how well pupils learn the curriculum. They provide helpful reading and mathematics support when pupils develop gaps in their knowledge. However, sometimes they do not reshape their teaching of the curriculum to build on what pupils know and can do. On these occasions, some pupils, including some with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not secure a suitable understanding from lesson activities. Sometimes, the checks staff make on pupils' understanding, do not identify misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge which hinders the progress pupils make.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have ensured that children get off to a flying start with their schooling. They have designed carefully a curriculum that prepares children successfully for Year 1 and beyond. The curriculum provides the right emphasis on children mastering the essential knowledge and skills that they need in language, reading, writing and mathematics. Staff use fascinating props to engage children in high-quality stories while developing their understanding of key language. Phonics teaching is effective and staff make sure children sit and hold pencils correctly when they write. Through staff modelling writing effectively, children quickly gain confidence as well as accuracy in applying their knowledge of phonics. Leaders ensure that the whole curriculum is taught well and the provision enables children to learn well through play and suitably engaging activities.

Staff work closely with parents and carers to support children's wellbeing and learning. This partnership begins early while preparing children for starting school and enables staff to identify when children might need additional support. Through the positive relationships that staff develop with them, children soon feel secure and happy in the early years. They develop confidence quickly with the routines of the classroom and learning alongside their key stage 1 peers.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have created an inclusive culture where all pupils can thrive, whatever their background or individual needs. Recognising where there were weaknesses, leaders improved their systems to ensure that they identify and assess pupils' individual needs quickly and accurately. They work effectively with external agencies to understand the adjustments pupils need to succeed. Leaders now work more closely with parents and carers to consider their views and knowledge when devising pupils' individual support plans.

Leaders ensure that staff receive suitable training to understand barriers to learning and implement pupils' support plans. They work alongside staff to devise suitable learning targets for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have helped staff to build expertise in adapting their delivery of the curriculum. Largely, staff provide the support that pupils with SEND need to access the curriculum successfully. Sometimes, pupils do not receive as precise or swift support as they should in lessons.

However, leaders have begun to support staff further to use their checks on pupils' learning to make consistently effective adaptations.

Leaders carefully check the progress of pupils who are disadvantaged or face additional challenges. They use additional funding thoughtfully to provide appropriately targeted academic support and access to wider personal development opportunities that enable these pupils to flourish.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The school has recently experienced a period of significant development. Leaders and governors are passionate about providing a high-quality education for all pupils. They have an accurate understanding of the school's context, strengths and areas for improvement. The decisions that leaders make are consistently guided by what is in pupils' best interests.

Leaders prioritised the essential development of the curriculum, including early years provision and phonics, while also raising expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. They worked closely with staff to strengthen curriculum delivery and to identify pupils' barriers to learning. The impact of this work is evident and leaders are determined to sustain and build on these improvements.

Given the scale of change, leaders and governors have been mindful of the effect on staff workload and wellbeing. They listen carefully to staff, taking their views into account. Staff value the support they receive to do their jobs well. They particularly appreciate leaders' thoughtful approach to professional learning. Opportunities to work with a mathematics hub and with colleagues through the local schools' network, for example, help to develop staff expertise.

Governors are deeply committed and have strengthened their oversight of the school's work. They maintain a clear understanding of pupils' experiences to fulfil their duties, including to support and challenge leaders effectively. Governors ensure leaders have the resources needed to secure sustained improvement. Governors and leaders value the school's partnership with parents and carers. They have strengthened their communication with parents so they have a greater understanding of the school's work.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders place pupils' personal development and wellbeing at the heart of the school's work. Their well-sequenced personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum reflects the school's values. It provides for pupils, learning about puberty and relationships at an age-appropriate level. Through well-taught PSHE and across the wider curriculum, pupils learn about the benefits of physical fitness and can talk about how a 'balanced plate' supports a healthy diet. They learn to keep themselves safe while riding their bicycle, for example, or when they are using digital technology. Pupils can talk about different ways to stay safe when they are online.

In designing their personal development programme, leaders consider carefully the school's context, ensuring that pupils learn about the cultural diversity of life in modern Britain. Assemblies and PSHE lessons foster pupils' understanding and respect for equalities and

fundamental British values well. Pupils know what respect means. They accept and celebrate difference and recognise that this helps them to grow as people. Generally, pupils develop a suitable understanding of important concepts such as discrimination.

The school promotes pupils' wider development well through many well-considered experiences. Pupils develop their talents and appreciation of the arts through participation in sports clubs, sports competitions, discussions with authors, music lessons, concerts and dramatic performances. Visits from members of parliament and visits to the Houses of Parliament, promote their understanding of democratic life and sense of responsibility. A raft of trips, thematic events and visitors build their character and understanding of the world. Leaders make thoughtful adaptations to ensure that vulnerable pupils benefit equally from these experiences.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive well-matched, targeted pastoral support. Pupils know how to seek help if they need it and speak positively about the support available to promote their wellbeing.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Willoughby Primary School is a vibrant hive of activity where pupils participate fully in school life and attend well. They benefit greatly from the positive relationships they develop with their peers and staff. Each morning, pupils and staff greet one another formally, yet warmly, on the playground before moving calmly into classes. Pupils form lasting friendships across age groups, contributing to the school's distinctive 'family feel'. Many parents value this highly and how the school is the centre of the village community.

Pupils rise to the school's high expectations for behaviour and attitudes to learning. They have a secure understanding of the school rules of being ready, respectful and safe. Pupils learn and play cooperatively and are supported effectively when they find it more difficult to manage their emotions. Pupils feel safe at school because bullying and deliberately unkind behaviour are rare. When concerns do arise, staff respond swiftly and effectively, ensuring pupils feel listened to and supported.

Children's positive start in the Reception Year helps them grow into confident, curious and increasingly independent learners. Staff are highly attentive to pupils' needs and interests. Pupils value how this supports their learning. Mostly, pupils enjoy learning and achieve well. Staff identify pupils with any barriers to learning quickly so that these pupils can receive targeted support. As a result, pupils mainly gain the essential knowledge that they need to be well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils lead active lives in school, with early morning 'wake and shake' sessions being well attended. They particularly enjoy practical learning opportunities and developing teamwork skills during forest school sessions. Pupils benefit from a wide range of enriching experiences that support their personal development. These help them to understand the world beyond the school and to develop their character well.

Next steps

- Leaders should complete their curriculum refinements, ensuring that the knowledge different year groups need to learn and remember is clearly defined across the curriculum.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff consistently enable pupils to build their knowledge from their starting points and develop the clarity and depth of their explanations.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff check pupils' knowledge systematically and use assessment information consistently well to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs and address misconceptions or gaps in learning.
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About this inspection

The co-chairs of the board of governors in this school are Nick Brown and Rebecca Kealy.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders. They also spoke with leaders about their oversight of the school's work in a particular aspect, such as inclusion. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The headteacher took up her post in September 2023.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Joanne Linnett

Lead inspector:

Claire Stylianides, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Priya Saujani, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 14 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

44

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

56

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

6.82%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.27%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

20.45%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	62%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	61%	S
2022/23 (final)	57%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	81%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	75%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	74%	S
2022/23 (final)	86%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	72%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	72%	S
2022/23 (final)	71%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	74%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	73%	S
2022/23 (final)	57%	73%	Below

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	4.0%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.6%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.4%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	8.3%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	8.3%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	2.6%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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