

Inspection of Windmill Hill Primary School

Windmill Hill, Windmill Hill South, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 6QE

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 11 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Windmill Hill Primary School, wear their uniforms with pride. They are happy in this caring and nurturing school. Staff know pupils and their families well. Pupils build strong relationships with staff. They trust staff to keep them safe.

A calm atmosphere pervades the school. From the Reception class, children learn to follow the school's rules and routines. Pupils behave exceptionally well. They treat one another with kindness and courtesy. Pupils are keen to learn new things. They are also resilient when faced with challenges.

The school has high expectations for pupils' academic achievement. By the end of key stage 2, pupils achieve well.

Pupils enjoy the full range of opportunities for learning that the school presents to them, such as learning in the outdoors. They have ample chances to take up leadership roles. For instance, well-being officers play a part in educating their classmates about healthy food choices. Pupils have a keen understanding of how to keep themselves safe from harm. For example, they talked in detail about their understanding of road safety. They enjoy participating in different activities, including football club and choir.

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

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from a broad curriculum. The school has carefully considered the essential knowledge and the order in which it should be taught. However, the early years curriculum is still being finalised. As a result, staff are not aware of the essential knowledge that children should learn. This hinders how well children learn and a minority do not get off to a quick start in the early years.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and they present information clearly for pupils. They break learning down appropriately to make sure that it builds on what pupils already know. Teachers choose appropriate activities to help pupils to develop a strong understanding of subjects. In most subjects, teachers check what pupils have learned and remembered. This helps them to identify any misconceptions or gaps in learning. Effective support is given to pupils who need to catch up with their learning.

The school swiftly identifies pupils' additional needs. Staff receive helpful information about pupils' SEND. Furthermore, they are well trained to support these pupils by adapting learning. For instance, modelling of learning is used effectively. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

A culture of reading is firmly embedded through the school. Pupils enjoy reading a wide variety of books written by different authors, including poetry. By key stage 2, most pupils read fluently and with confidence.

The school has devised its own phonics programme. Staff are trained in how to deliver it and most deliver it effectively. The books that pupils read are well matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils who struggle with reading are given support to help them to catch up with the phonics programme. Nevertheless, pupils in key stage 1 do not have plentiful opportunity to apply their phonics knowledge independently. This hinders how quickly they become fluent readers.

Pupils swiftly learn how to behave well in school. They conduct themselves sensibly and follow the school's rules diligently. In the Reception class, children learn to take turns and to share. Pupils get along well, and in lessons, they try their best. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), attend school regularly.

The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is thoughtfully ordered to allow pupils to build on what they already know. The school has ensured that pupils know how to keep themselves healthy both physically and mentally. For instance, younger pupils talked about appreciating the small things in everyday life. Older pupils know that keeping physically active can improve how they feel about themselves.

Governors are committed to the school and they know it well. Parents and carers are pleased with how well the school cares for their children. Staff are very happy working at this school. The way that the curriculums are designed has helped them to manage their workload effectively. However, at times, some leaders lack the expertise to be able to evaluate accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the areas that they lead. This means that they are not always aware of what needs to be put in place to bring about improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some leaders lack the knowledge to accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their areas of responsibility. They do not always know what is working well or what will improve outcomes for pupils. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school should develop the expertise of leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of their areas and to know what actions are needed to secure improvements.
- Some pupils in key stage 1, including some of those with SEND, do not apply their phonics knowledge independently when reading. This means that these pupils do not read fluently as quickly as they could. The school should ensure that these

pupils are provided with regular opportunities to practise the sounds that they have learned so that they begin to read with greater fluency and confidence.

- The curriculum in the early years has not been finalised. As a result, staff are unsure about what children need to learn in readiness for Year 1. This prevents some children from getting off to a strong start, particularly in terms of communication and language, and limits their achievement. The school should ensure that the early years curriculum sets out the important knowledge and vocabulary that children need to know and remember as the foundation for their future learning.

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	111177
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10337646
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Irene Bramwell and Su Sinha
Headteacher	Paula Newman
Website	www.windmillhill.school
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 July 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make any use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, geography and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at social times.
- An inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar member of staff. She spoke with some pupils about reading.
- An inspector met with representatives of the governing body including a joint chair of governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation documents, minutes of governor meetings and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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.

Inspection team

Jenny Jones, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Janette Walker

Ofsted Inspector

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