

# Inspection of a good school: Willoughby Academy

South Road, Bourne, Lincolnshire PE10 9JD

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 November 2023

## Outcome

Willoughby Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Vicki Billyard. This school is part of Priory Federation of Academies, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Ian Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Howard Gee.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enthusiastically join in with every aspect of school life. They enjoy attending and say that they feel safe. Staff are caring and supportive. Parents and carers appreciate the expert help staff give to their children. One parent reflected the views of others when they stated: 'The school has a calm and friendly environment which is fantastic for all the children. The staff know the pupils really well.'

There are high ambitions for all pupils. They are supported to understand each other's feelings and to engage with others in a positive way. The ethos of 'be safe, be ready, be kind' threads throughout all aspects of the school. Staff support pupils to communicate their needs in a variety of ways. They know the causes of distress for each pupil, so they can intervene early to help pupils remain calm. Pupils are polite and respectful around the school. They look after each other and play well together.

Staff are passionate for pupils to play an active part in their community. The joint working with local employers is exceptional. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are fully included in the school community through carefully structured experiences which encourage communication and interaction. The preparation for adulthood curriculum ensures that pupils are ready for their next stage of learning and for adult life.

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

There are suitable 'curriculum pathways' in place to meet the pupils' complex needs. Ambitious end goals for pupils guide the decisions about which pathway is best suited for

each individual. There is continuing development of the curriculum offer. In all pathways, staff have thought carefully about the important knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn and the order in which they will learn it. In some subjects within the formal pathway, this detailed planning is new and is only just starting to have an impact in lessons.

The 'formal pathway' provides opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and skills in a range of subjects, including food technology, science, computing and outdoor education. Logically organised English and mathematics lessons help pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Older pupils also complete units of work in preparation for adulthood that build towards accredited outcomes. Staff plan lessons that take into account pupils' additional needs. Pupils enjoy well-structured lessons. They engage with the subject they are studying. Staff use questioning to check pupils' understanding. However, when staff identify misconceptions or knowledge gaps, they do not always provide further support so that pupils' understanding is secure before moving on to new topics.

The more 'informal curriculum' provides positive learning opportunities for pupils. From children in the early years right through to older pupils, this curriculum provides well for pupils' sensory and communication needs. There are systems in place to assess what pupils know and can do. Staff use 'provision maps' that are linked to pupils' education and health care (EHC) plans to organise the next steps to help pupils to learn and develop further. The 'provision map' is new and there is some inconsistency in how staff have used this system to assess accurately whether pupils have successfully met their targets. Some provision maps do not contain clear success criteria. As a result, some of the targets teachers set for some pupils are not always sharp enough to ensure that these pupils achieve as highly as they should.

Across all curriculum pathways, communication is prioritised. A recent focus on developing a clear framework for communication has led to a positive impact on pupils' ability to communicate their wants and needs effectively to staff. As a result, pupils are less frustrated and make progress with their learning in a calm environment.

Reading is prioritised. There is a strong drive to promote in many ways a love of books and engagement with reading. Sensory stories are used particularly effectively to engage pupils with books. Pupils who are capable of reading benefit from a phonics-based reading programme to become more fluent readers.

Staff foster in pupils a readiness to learn and the resilience they need to achieve. Staff have ensured that pupils' behaviour support plans are comprehensive and bespoke to their needs. The regularly updated plans provide detailed guidance so that all adults provide consistent support to help pupils manage their behaviour.

Pupils' personal development is at the forefront of all the school does. Pupils learn about difference. They know this is a positive thing and celebrate it. They know, for example, that people have different faiths and beliefs. Pupils know how to keep physically healthy. They learn what makes relationships safe and positive.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about the many different trips they have been on and the interesting visitors that come to the school. They are excited about the opportunities they have to undertake work experience placements. There are many opportunities for pupils to get involved and be visible in the local community. The preparation for adulthood and the careers education pupils experience are exceptional. Pupils are provided with access to high-quality careers education, information and guidance. Pupils who are above the compulsory age for education are well prepared for adulthood and their next steps in education, and supported or independent living.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the support the school leaders give them. They say that leaders care about their well-being and are considerate of 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)**

- When staff use assessment to identify misconceptions or knowledge gaps, they do not always provide further support to ensure that pupils' understanding is secure before moving on to new topics. As a result, pupils' ability to recall and use this knowledge is limited. This impacts on their progression through the curriculum. The school should ensure that staff know how best to reassure themselves that all pupils are secure in the key knowledge and skills before introducing new learning.
- There are inconsistencies in the way staff have produced and assessed the new provision map system. Some provision maps do not contain success criteria. Some lack the clarity staff need to ensure that provision matches closely to the small step outcomes that help build towards the larger targets outlined in pupils' EHC plans. This means that the targets teachers set for pupils are not always the most important or valid next steps. The school should ensure that the targets teachers set for pupils provide accurate and timely steps that build towards the outcomes in pupils' EHC plans so that pupils can achieve as highly as they should.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, The Willoughby School, to be good in October 2012.

## **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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147414
<b>Local authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10281526
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	140
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	10
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Howard Gee
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vicki Billyard
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.willoughbyacademy.co.uk">www.willoughbyacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Willoughby Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2019. When its predecessor school, The Willoughby School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school provides education for pupils aged between two and 19 years old. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils on roll below the age of four.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils have a range of complex special educational needs, including: autism; speech, language and communication needs; severe learning difficulties; and profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Pupils who are above the compulsory age for education pursue a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs, including preparing them for adulthood.

## Information about this inspection

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 held various meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with the chair of trustees, a trustee, the CEO and directors of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into communication and interaction (including reading), and the formal and semi-formal curriculum pathways. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the personal development curriculum, which included personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, careers education and preparation for adulthood.
- Inspectors also looked at individual pupils' EHC plans and associated learning plans, as well as individual behaviour management plans and healthcare plans.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the academy development plan.
- 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.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the results of the staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors met with pupils to gather their views.

## Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christine Horrocks

Ofsted Inspector

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