
CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

Name of School:	Willowbrook Primary Academy
School Address:	Roborough Green, Thurnby Lodge, Leicester LE5 2NA
Hub School:	East Midlands Hub (Rushy Mead)

Telephone Number:	0116 241 3756
Email address:	office@willowbrook-rmet.org.uk

Unique Reference Number:	120056
Local Authority:	Leicester
Type of School:	Primary school
School Category:	Academy
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Number on roll:	462
Head teacher/Principal:	Marie Collins

Date of last Ofsted inspection:	March 2011
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding

Date of Quality Assurance Review:	23 – 25 January 2017
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QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES¹

School Improvement Strategies: Outstanding

Pupil Outcomes: Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and Assessment: Outstanding

Area of Excellent Practice:
The Curriculum Outstanding

Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that Willowbrook Primary Academy appears to be firmly within the Outstanding grade as judged by Ofsted in the school's previous Ofsted report.

¹ Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

Information about the school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Provision for the early years includes a Nursery class and two Reception classes. Typically, around three-quarters of children who attend the Nursery continue their education at the school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The remainder come from a range of ethnic groups, the largest minority being from Asian backgrounds
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is broadly average.
- More pupils than typically found join or leave the school at times other than the usual points.
- The school became part of the RMET (Rushey Mead Educational Trust) Academy Trust in June 2016.

School Improvement Strategies

What went well

- The relentless drive of senior leaders to improve the pupils' life chances is evident at every turn. The principal and vice-principal play a critical role in sustaining the school's vision, 'Brighter futures, Learning together'. They are supported by a highly effective leadership team. All staff willingly take on leadership roles. There is an excellent team spirit and a sense of purpose permeates the school. Leaders are sensitive to the need to ensure a reasonable work/life balance. This is apparent, not least, in the welcoming staff room and discussions about reducing teacher workload in different areas.
- Staff across the school have a passion for involving the local community in school life. For example, parents of children in the younger classes are invited to stay during registration to complete an activity alongside their children. Parent workshops are offered throughout the year and parents are actively encouraged to attend whole school events. Close links are also made with the local community, such as the Children's Centre.
- A strong capacity to improve is evident from the way the school has sustained high standards over the last few years. There is no complacency. Self-evaluation involves all stakeholders, including pupils. The school 'parliament' for example, came up with suggestions about what type of learning boys enjoyed. Rigorous review of all aspects of the school leads to well-founded development plans. These include ambitious and quantifiable targets, with the central focus on improving outcomes for all pupils.
- School leaders have considerable expertise in assessment. Checks are made on how well pupils are doing four times each year. This information is collated and carefully analysed to spot any anomalies, for example, in the progress of different groups or individuals. Where pupils are falling behind, immediate support is arranged.
- Teachers and support staff benefit from many opportunities to extend their skills. These include training sessions led by school staff and external courses, including those run by Challenge Partners. Recognising the expertise among the staff, and with succession planning in mind, teachers are supported in the development of leadership skills. Recently qualified teachers value the bespoke support they receive from leaders and colleagues.
- The recently introduced video recording system, which allows teachers to reflect, both on their practice and how pupils respond, is proving successful. An excellent staff handbook provides clear guidance and sets out expectations for all staff.

- The impact of the school's programme of professional development is evident in the high quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- School leaders make every effort to ensure all pupils do as well as they can. Despite their low starting points, pupils have outperformed those nationally over the last three years in almost all areas. Around half of the pupils are disadvantaged. A high proportion of pupils who make better than expected progress is disadvantaged.

Even better if...

... succession planning took account of leaders' roles in ensuring the continued performance of the school alongside the success and development of the trust.

Pupil Outcomes

- Most children enter the Nursery with below average profiles for their age. Outstanding provision in the early years ensures they have the best possible start to their education. Their individual needs are identified quickly and are constantly reviewed and monitored. High expectations across the provision along with collaborative teaching, leads to swift progress being made. Around 75% of the Nursery children transfer to Reception class where they continue their quick progression. The proportion reaching a good level of development is above the national average. As they enter Year 1 children are equipped and ready for learning throughout the rest of the curriculum.
- Pupils progress rapidly through both key stages. By the end of Year 6, pupils typically outperform those nationally in all areas. Given their low starting points, this indicates outstanding progress through the school.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check in 2016 was slightly above the national average. This contributes to pupils' progress in reading and writing. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards at the end of year 2 in 2016 was broadly average. However, the proportion achieving a greater depth was above the national average reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2016, Year 6 pupils reached above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion reaching the expected standards in both English and mathematics was 13 percentage points above average in both 2015 and 2016. The proportion of pupils achieving a greater depth in reading and writing was above average. In mathematics, a few of the more able pupils were not reaching their potential. This is being addressed through careful monitoring of the work set during lessons and by tracking their progress.
- Staff undertake an extensive program of moderation. Rigorous tracking of all pupils enables them to make accurate predictions about attainment in 2017, which shows further progress to be made in all areas. Recent gender differences in English are being diminished. There has been focus on structured phonics, speech and language and strong learning objectives. Pupils, boys in particular, are being urged to adopt a 'can do' attitude to their learning. Following discussions with pupils, boys have increasing access to technology for recording, and a wider range of topics from which to choose. At their request, they are given further guidance about 'what good work looks like'.

- The school is increasingly successful in diminishing the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and all pupils nationally. In writing at the end of key stage 2 last year, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching expectations was 87% against 74% nationally. The proportion reaching a good level of development was 29% against 15% nationally. There remain some differences in achievement in reading and mathematics which the school is addressing energetically.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

What went well

- Excellent relationships underpin the high-quality teaching and learning. Teachers and support staff establish a purposeful atmosphere during lessons. This means pupils get on with the task in hand with very few distractions.
- Teachers are highly reflective and welcome feedback. They are encouraged by school leaders to 'take risks' in the classroom. Enquiry based projects give teachers increased ownership and accountability for teaching and learning, and have a positive impact on the practice of the school.
- Pupils have well-embedded strategies for learning. These are fostered through five tenets of learning that are central to the school's approach: responsibility, resourcefulness, resilience, reflective and ready; known as the 'Five Rs'. The notion of 'growth mindset', described succinctly by one pupil as 'never give up and you'll get better', is also an increasing aspect of pupils' learning.
- Pupils routinely reflect on their learning and develop a sense of personal responsibility. This attitude is exemplified by the passion shown by the 'school parliament' for improving their education. Pupils are confident in the knowledge that school leaders respond to their suggestions and queries, and are an integral part of improvement planning.
- Teachers are highly skilled in questioning techniques, which probe learning and help children make links and connections, thereby deepening children's understanding. Pupils are made aware of the learning objectives and how they can achieve them.
- Teachers focus relentlessly on vulnerable groups and use a range of strategies to diminish gender gaps. Initiatives such as 'Reading Pro' and 'premier league readers' have engaged boys. Their interest and motivation are evident across the school.
- Teachers generally ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all groups, including the more able, although occasionally pupils of the very highest ability could be set more demanding tasks.
- 'Hooks' into learning capture children's interest and this results in a high level of engagement is evident in lessons. A focus on collaborative learning means all pupils are routinely given the opportunity to discuss tasks to deepen their understanding or clarify concepts and terminology.
- Teachers are relentlessly focused on inclusive practice and strive to meet the needs of all pupils. Teaching assistants at all levels add value to lessons through carefully timed interventions which result in all groups of pupils making progress. Expert teaching staff successfully accelerate progress through targeted support.

Even better if...

... the school considered

- the use of success criteria as a self-help tool in an age appropriate manner
- "visible learning" techniques to help children reflect on their learning and progress during lessons
- how higher attaining pupils are 'stretched' and challenged during all lessons

Areas of Excellence

The Curriculum

Why has this area been identified as a strength?

- The school offers an extremely rich, varied and personalised curriculum. It successfully promotes pupils' academic progress and personal development. The curriculum is tailored to the needs of the community and there is strong focus on broadening horizons, raising aspirations and enhancing life opportunities.
- As a result of consultation with all stakeholders, four key areas were identified. These are personal, social, citizenship and health education (PSCHE), enterprise, community, and environment. It is underpinned by the 'Five Rs' and notion of 'growth mindset'.
- Subject leaders ensure that day to-day learning is as engaging as possible. The English, curriculum is highly imaginative. Learning is centred on books, including the in-depth study of 16 novels as pupils move through key stage 2. Work in mathematics is personalised through the skillful interpretation of a published scheme. A themed approach combines history, geography, art, and design technology. Topics such as 'awesome ancients', 'dungeon and dragons' and 'raging rivers' grasp pupils' attention and promote a real thirst for knowledge.
- Whole school themes are also highly motivating. For example, the school year started with a focus on Roald Dahl which included: a reading at home incentive; a dress up day; teacher performances; themed lunches and whole school displays. The Autumn term concluded with a competition to win tickets to see The Twits at a local theatre. Enrichment by specialist teachers adds to school life with judo, dance, French, and ukulele lessons timetabled across the school.
- A variety of educational visits enrich pupils' experience and provide many memorable moments. Such visits are carefully planned to enhance the 5Rs and promote a growth mindset. Recently these have included: a residential adventure trip for year 6; a visit to the National Space Centre, and an activity with a local Asian restaurant. Every year group is also booked on to a trip to see some live theatre this year.
- A renewed emphasis on PSCHE has been given through the introduction of weekly lessons that include emotional literacy, social skills, and spiritual development. The school parliament has a strong voice regarding the curriculum. The elected members make insightful suggestions and complete their own school development plan. Their suggestion that 'science should be more fun' is incorporated in the school's current review of the science curriculum.
- The school is justifiably proud of its links with the community. A recent 'bedtime story' event was very well supported. During harvest, year 1 delivered parcels, collected by all children in school, to the local community. Responsibility for the wider world was promoted practically through the 'Operation Christmas Child' shoebox appeal. The school's PREVENT responsibilities are taken seriously and evident in several community activities.

What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

- The Vice Principal plays a pivotal role in curriculum design and implementation. Subject coordinators are empowered and given dedicated time lead and develop their areas. They are held accountable in providing a rich and inspiring programme. A three-yearly cycle helps to ensure that leaders keep up to date, review policies, complete pupil interviews, learn from moderation and reflect through learning walks. Opportunities for professional development in this area are provided across the trust. These include network meetings attended by leaders in English, science, the early years, and the leader responsible for provision for the most able pupils.

What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

- Engagement in lessons is high and, consequently, attendance is rising year on year
- End of key stage results remain above national in almost all areas. The unrelenting drive by subject leaders has improved pupils' experiences, vocabulary, and aspirations. Pupils strive to be their best and, thus, achievement is high in all areas. Parental questionnaires indicate that 90% find the curriculum exciting and feel that homework related to the curriculum related interesting and achievable. A telling example of the aspirational curriculum is encapsulated by the recent election of an ex-pupil to represent Leicester as a youth MP.

What is the name and email address of the staff lead in this area?

- Zoe Simpson zsimpson@willowbrook-rmet.org.uk

What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

The staff regularly take advantage of the development opportunities provided by Challenge Partners. Following discussion with the headteacher, the school would not like any further support at this time.