

Inspection of a good school: Willingdon Community School

Broad Road, Lower Willingdon, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN20 9QX

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 June 2023

Outcome

Willingdon Community School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has high expectations of pupils and a strong focus on celebration and praise. Pupils say that bullying is uncommon and dealt with effectively. There is extensive provision for reporting bullying. Pupils say they feel happy and safe. They know that they can talk with a member of staff if they have any concerns. Pupils are kind and caring. They look after one another.

Careers support ensures that aspirations are high so that significant numbers of pupils consistently continue their education post-16. The careers programme is well supported by visiting speakers and a strong programme of work experience. Extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities are extensive. They encompass careers talks, university visits and gap-year students mentoring pupils to encourage their high aspirations.

The school actively supports pupils' personal development, welfare and well-being. The current programme of relationships and sex education and health education is relatively new. Links to assemblies, tutor time and other subjects are still being developed. Fundamental British values are well supported across the school, with a focus on tolerance and mutual respect. Equality and diversity are highlighted and celebrated. The school does not shy away from issues around LGBTQ+, race and positive masculinity.

Leaders and governors are firmly committed to personal excellence, evidenced through ambition, respect, courtesy, compassion and honesty. They are knowledgeable, committed and engaged. They have a clear understanding of the school's priorities and areas for improvement. The school supports many other schools through its outreach work. It is highly regarded in the local community.

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

Leaders have created a curriculum which is carefully planned and sequenced. Content is ambitious for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils are identified and suitably supported by teachers

and learning support professionals. Relationships are exceptionally strong so that staff have a secure knowledge of individual pupils' needs. Support for higher prior attaining pupils includes interventions, additional challenges and university visits as well as lessons in Latin and triple science.

Within departments, teachers collaborate exceptionally well. Joint lesson planning ensures that areas of expertise are shared and support best practice in pedagogy. Links with other subjects are not always systematically pursued to support pupils' wider knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils miss out on opportunities to consolidate their understanding and to remember more.

Teachers are subject experts. Lesson planning ensures that topics are revisited with an emphasis on retaining knowledge. Reading is prioritised, and weaker readers are comprehensively supported to make progress. Literacy skills are highlighted, and pupils can define subject-specific words but not always with precision. Assessment is regular and used well to identify where further support and feedback is needed.

External examination outcomes are extremely strong. Pupils' progress is significantly above national averages in most subjects, and in the highest 20% in English and mathematics. However, the take-up of modern foreign languages is not high enough, and this limits the number of pupils taking the full English Baccalaureate. A review of option choices across languages and humanities is addressing this shortfall.

Attendance is high. Persistent absence is low. Pupils want to attend school. Suspensions are rare, and always considered as a last resort. There have been no permanent exclusions since 2019. Pupils arrive punctually to school and to their lessons. Intolerance and discrimination are not acceptable. There is a relentless focus on promoting mutual respect and understanding. Pupils are considerate of one another.

Parents and carers are generally very positive and supportive of the school. They say that the school has high expectations and that their children do well. They are extremely positive about the range of subjects and the extensive extra-curricular provision. However, a very small minority of parents are less enthusiastic and less engaged. Concerns raised by parents were not always borne out by inspection findings.

Senior leaders have used self-evaluation to identify the key drivers for ongoing and further improvement. Middle leaders are assisted through effective line management and well-focused professional development. Workload is well supported, and staff say that they are proud to work at the school. They say that senior leaders 'look after staff very well and manage well-being effectively'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a robust, secure and well-established culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. All staff receive timely training and

frequent updates. Staff know how to identify and report safeguarding issues. Leaders work with a range of specialists inside and outside of the school.

Pupils are supported to keep safe, including when online. They learn how to look after their physical and mental health. Pastoral systems ensure that all pupils have an adult they can talk to if needed. Pupils say that concerns are responded to quickly and sensitively. They have confidence in the processes and have a variety of ways to report any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The proportion of pupils studying a modern foreign language is low. Leaders should continue with their efforts to raise the profile, highlight the benefits and significantly increase the uptake of the subject so that pupils have a broad and balanced curriculum.
- A very small minority of parents do not feel sufficiently engaged with the school. As a result, they feel negative and uninformed about its intentions. Leaders should continue to work resolutely with parents so that they are all sufficiently engaged with the school and better understand how it is supporting their children.

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 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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114592
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10240346
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,016
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jane Branson
Headteacher	Emily May
Website	www.willingdonschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Willingdon Community School is an average-sized 11 to 16 mixed community school. The school is maintained by the East Sussex local authority.
- Forty pupils attend off-site provision on a part-time or full-time basis at five registered education providers and two other providers recommended by the local authority.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders and visited a sample of lessons. They spoke with subject teachers, talked to pupils and looked at samples of their work.

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff and pupils. They looked at the single central record and reviewed safeguarding practices. Inspectors considered school policies, curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination information. The lead inspector met with governors and spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and at additional, written comments received from parents and carers. They considered the survey returns completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jason Philipsz

Ofsted Inspector

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