

Willow Park CofE Primary School

Park Lane, St Michael's Hill, BS2 8BE

Unique reference number (URN): 148841

Monitoring inspection report:

21 and 22 April 2026

At the most recent graded inspection, in March 2024, the following areas were identified as needing to improve:

The curriculum is poorly designed. Pupils do not build knowledge and skills over time to help them to learn the curriculum successfully. The school must ensure that the curriculum in all subjects identifies the essential knowledge and skills pupils need to learn.

Pupils struggle to apply their knowledge of sounds in their reading. Staff do not consistently support pupils to read with accuracy. Consequently, pupils do not develop reading fluency. The school must ensure that staff develop pupils' decoding and blending of words so that pupils are able to access more challenging work as they move through the school.

The curriculum is not consistently adapted to meet the needs of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). As a result, pupils do not develop their language skills effectively enough. Furthermore, many struggle to learn the wider curriculum, including in personal, social and health education.

The school should ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those who speak EAL in order for them to achieve success in all aspects of their learning.

Assessment is limited in all areas of the curriculum. Staff lack the knowledge to identify what pupils need to know and where there are gaps in pupils' understanding. This means that pupils do not get the support they need to achieve well. The school must swiftly design a systematic approach to assessment.

The school has not taken urgent action to address the systemic weaknesses that exist. As a result, pupils do not receive the quality of education they deserve. The school must work with external support to urgently address these weaknesses.

Leaders and governors are taking effective action to improve the school but continued work is needed to remove the special measures designation.

The school may appoint an early career teacher before the next monitoring inspection. This should be no more than one.

During the monitoring inspection, inspectors focused on the following evaluation areas:

- Leadership and governance
- Inclusion
- Curriculum and teaching
- Achievement
- Attendance and behaviour
- Early years

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has continued to draw on the external support of The Leaf Trust. This collaboration has been very effective. The school has started to adopt some of the trust's systems, such as attendance procedures. This is helping the school to prepare for the imminent transition into the trust. Governors have also received training from the trust and continue to hold leaders to account effectively. While the staff body has reduced in size, it has not affected the rapid pace of change. This is because leaders have continued to ensure that they focus on the right priorities in the right order. They continually check the impact of their actions. Consequently, leaders have an accurate view of the school. They have addressed many of the weaknesses identified at the last graded inspection. However, they acknowledge that the sequencing of some wider subjects at key stage 2 is not yet fully coherent and does not reflect recent changes to class structures.

Leaders have rightly prioritised improving the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. This has resulted in pupils learning more, particularly the youngest pupils. These pupils are benefiting from a settled and ambitious start to their education. There continues to be a need to address older pupils' gaps in knowledge. Staff recognise the ongoing improvements in the school. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

At the previous graded inspection, safeguarding was evaluated as being effective.

Inclusion

The provision for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is improving but remains variable. The school has clear systems in place to identify pupils with barriers quickly so that staff can provide adaptations and support. However, some targets for pupils lack precision or are not useful. As a result, some pupils do not get the necessary support they need to be successful. Leaders have quickly put in appropriate pastoral support for the many pupils who join part way through their education.

There is now an effective use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. This is being used to positive effect to help pupils catch up in their learning and support families with attendance.

Achievement

The school's 2025 published outcomes at the end of key stage 2 showed a significant improvement from the historic low outcomes. Outcomes in phonics and the multiplication

check also showed an improvement and reflect the school's success in helping many of the pupils who have fallen behind to catch up.

Younger pupils are learning the curriculum much better than in the past. This includes those pupils with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language. However, some older pupils have gaps that remain due to the legacy of weaknesses in teaching. Improvements in the writing curriculum mean that more pupils are able to write with accuracy and fluency. Many pupils take pride in their work.

Pupils' knowledge in the wider curriculum is much weaker than in English and mathematics and remains a key focus for the school.

Attendance and behaviour

Pupils' attendance is on an upward trajectory, although it remains below the national average. Leaders have ensured that attendance systems now better identify when to intervene if pupils' attendance drops. The school makes its expectations of attendance clear to families as soon as pupils join the school. It uses other professionals effectively to help support and challenge families with attendance. Leaders' open and nurturing relationships with families mean they can quickly remove any potential barriers to attendance that pupils may face.

Pupils' conduct in lessons and at social times continues to be positive. Most pupils show positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school. Bullying is not an issue.

Curriculum and teaching

Through regular, high-quality training and coaching, leaders have raised most staff's expectations of what pupils can learn. In lessons, staff generally draw on effective teaching approaches. When teaching is more effective, staff explain new content clearly and it is well matched to pupils' needs. Where it is less effective, staff do not use what they know about pupils to further develop their learning.

Leaders have improved the teaching of phonics substantially and this is now a strength of the school's provision. This is because there is an explicit, clearly defined curriculum that staff follow closely. Leaders train most staff to ensure that they have the expertise to teach the curriculum effectively. Staff regularly check pupils in phonics to identify gaps in knowledge. However, a few staff in key stage 2 lack the expertise of their colleagues to deliver the phonics programme to those older pupils who require additional reading support.

Leaders have prioritised the effective teaching of writing to complement the improvements in reading. The curriculum identifies with precision the building blocks pupils need to write well. Staff follow the curriculum closely. They demonstrate clearly how to use accurate letter formation, posture and pencil grip.

Many pupils join the school from overseas and speak English as an additional language. Some have had no formal education previously. Staff waste no time in checking pupils'

gaps academically so that they can provide additional support to help pupils catch up. This includes pupils who speak English as an additional language. This is because the school now has clear systems in place to check precisely what pupils can do.

The order in which pupils learn the wider curriculum requires further work, particularly at key stage 2.

Early years

Changes in leadership have brought expertise to the early years, leading to improvements. For example, leaders have carefully devised an ambitious curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. Leaders have carefully considered how to develop children's communication and language. Staff carefully plan activities and adapt the provision to promote conversations with children and their peers. However, some adult interactions do not develop children's language in the way that leaders intend.

Children, including those who speak English as an additional language, follow well-established routines in the early years. Staff take the time to get to know children and ensure they feel happy and settled.

Additional next steps

Leaders and governors should continue to work to address the priorities for improvement identified in the last graded inspection report.

About this inspection

The inspectors carried out this monitoring inspection under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005, and it was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded inspection that took place in March 2024.

The school's previous inspection and the first monitoring inspection were carried out under the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) at that time. The renewed EIF took effect from 10 November 2025. The areas for improvement identified at the school's graded inspection and subsequent monitoring inspection have been cross-referenced to the relevant evaluation areas in the inspection toolkit for consideration on this monitoring inspection.

The purpose of this monitoring inspection was not to determine grades for any of the evaluation areas set out in the school inspection toolkit. The purpose was to identify and report on the school's progress in addressing priorities for improvement since the school's previous inspection.

Since the last monitoring visit, a new permanent headteacher has been appointed, as well as another teacher. Some staff have left. From the start of the summer term,

the school has merged the two key stage 2 classes together into one. The school is in the final stages of preparing to join The Leaf Trust.

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, headteacher, staff, governors, the local authority and the chief executive officer of the supporting multi-academy trust about the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection.

Lead inspector

Jason Edge

His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector

Tom Brewer

His Majesty's Inspector

About this school

School capacity	210
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Number of pupils on roll	54
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