

The Willows CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	125681
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	381107
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2012
Lead inspector	Georgina Beasley

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	328
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Lindsay
Headteacher	Janis McBride
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2007
School address	The Willows North Alcester Road Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 9QN
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Georgina Beasley

Additional inspector

Daniel Kilborn

Additional inspector

Sarah Somers

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 24 lessons taught by 12 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, pupils and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work, planning and assessment documents, monitoring reports, safeguarding procedures, the school's learning improvement plan and subject action plans. The inspectors received and analysed 93 questionnaires from parents and carers and 55 from pupils.

Information about the school

Most pupils who attend this larger-than-average school are from White British backgrounds. The remainder are from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds. A below-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Fewer pupils than average are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is also below average. The school has admitted more pupils than usual over the last two years as it moves towards having two classes in each year group. Children start in one of two Reception classes in the September following their fourth birthday. A higher than average number of pupils joins the school intermittently throughout the year. Building work to extend the school's accommodation is ongoing. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The school has the International Schools and Eco-schools awards, Healthy Schools status and the Dyslexia Friendly Mark. A breakfast- and after-school club operates daily on the school site, but it is not managed by the governors and is inspected separately.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Staff share a clear and purposeful vision that underpins a concerted whole-school drive for improvement, and pupils achieve well thanks to good teaching. The school is not outstanding because teachers do not consistently check pupils' ongoing understanding quickly enough to ensure that they always make the progress of which they are capable. Also, while pupils know their targets and use them to assess their work at the end of most lessons, they are not always involved in planning them and do not consistently refer to them in lessons to evaluate and improve their learning.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Their good computer skills support learning well. Good opportunities to reflect on and talk about their learning promote good communication skills. Well-targeted support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs helps them to make good progress.
- Teachers have high expectations and ask questions that challenge pupils and help them to think for themselves how to complete a task. A variety of teaching and learning methods ensure that pupils concentrate. When lessons do involve pupils fully in planning and leading their learning, their attitudes and progress are outstanding.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Well-planned opportunities to debate moral issues promote pupils' excellent empathy for the feelings of others. Behaviour is good. Pupils feel safe. They confirm that boisterous behaviour 'only happens occasionally' and that bullying incidents 'are rare'.
- Good leadership and management have resulted in good improvement to the quality of teaching, and especially the teaching of writing. Performance is managed well. The headteacher involves all staff in checking the school's performance, and holds them to account for improving it.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend pupils' involvement in planning their targets, and ensure that they use them consistently and effectively in lessons to evaluate and make improvements to their learning independently.
- Ensure teachers consistently check pupils' understanding during lessons to target interventions and give additional challenge quickly, and so support faster progress.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children make good progress in the Reception classes. The learning environment promotes inquisitive learners. Children have good opportunity to plan and lead their own learning, although adults are sometimes too quick to decide for them where they will learn. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school and by Year 6 attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 2, pupils confidently use their knowledge of sounds to blend unfamiliar words. They talk about what is happening in stories and comment on surprising facts they have found in non-fiction books. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils diagnosed with dyslexia develop good strategies to support reading and writing skills, due to the focused support they receive. More-able pupils are challenged and supported to reach the higher National Curriculum levels in all year groups. Pupils who join the school late are supported well and make good progress, whatever their starting points.

Well-planned projects help pupils to develop good speaking, reading, writing, mathematics and computer skills in a range of subjects. Pupils debate moral issues and negotiate decisions confidently. For example, after measuring the playground and evaluating the available space, Year 5 and 6 pupils negotiated where the best place would be to relocate the 'WWOW theatre' (Willows Window on the World) after the planned building extensions have finished. Good computer skills enable pupils to present their ideas and record mathematical results independently by the end of Year 6. Pupils' writing has improved particularly well over the last two years, and attainment in writing is now above average in all year groups.

Pupils told inspectors that they learn a lot in lessons. Inspectors endorse this view. Learning and progress in lessons are typically good. Pupils are engaged because lessons are interesting. Sometimes learning and progress are excellent. For example, Year 6 pupils used previous learning about the components of successful stories to plan for themselves what to include in their own. Subsequent well-written stories included sophisticated language, complex sentences and accurate grammar of a

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standard above the level expected for their age. Pupils in Year 2 made excellent progress when they worked in groups with the teacher to learn how to halve two-digit numbers. By explaining the process themselves, they were all able to independently partition numbers up to 100 into tens and units before halving each one and then adding the two halves together.

Quality of teaching

The large majority of pupils and their parents and carers rightly feel that teaching is good. Teachers ask questions that help pupils to decide for themselves how to extend their learning. Teachers' high expectations are reflected in tasks that challenge all pupils, and especially the most able. A varied range of teaching methods keeps pupils engaged in lessons and helps them to concentrate throughout.

Teachers use assessment information well to plan tasks that meet the varying needs of different ability groups in lessons. They or the skilled teaching assistants check that everyone understands what to do. Sometimes they fail to do this early enough, so they miss opportunities to provide support quickly to accelerate progress. Pupils are not always given the chance to explain their thinking so that they can be fully challenged by extended tasks. Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs targets their specific learning needs well. Pupils who find learning to read difficult in Years 1 and 2 receive good support from adult reading partners to help them make rapid progress in a very short time. Their progress is checked for the rest of their time in school and further interventions are implemented if this slows. Pupils check their learning with teachers against their target sheets at the end of many lessons to assess how well they have done. They are not yet fully involved in planning these targets. Only occasionally do pupils refer to targets at the beginning and during lessons to challenge themselves to do their best work and to make improvements independently.

Teaching supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Good planning ensures that pupils have good opportunities to work together on projects across the curriculum and, for example, to help each other solve problems in mathematics. Lessons that focus on considering the feelings and views of others result in high-quality debates about moral issues.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most pupils and their parents and carers feel that behaviour is good for most, if not all, of the time. During the inspection, positive support from staff promoted good behaviour across the school. Pupils feel safe in school. Incidents of bullying of any kind are rare. Pupils are confident that if there were any, the headteacher 'would sort it out'. All staff have completed relevant training and follow safeguarding procedures consistently. Positive relationships result in open discussions in lessons about feelings and concerns. Pupils are polite and look out for each other. They value being involved in decision making through the school council and enjoy representing the school at local events.

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Pupils enjoy school. Their positive attitudes are reflected in their above average attendance and excellent punctuality. Pupils respond positively to teachers' comments by making the suggested improvements to their work. Work is always presented neatly. Their attitudes are outstandingly positive when they are fully involved in planning and organising their learning. They particularly enjoy practical, investigative activities such as learning outdoors in the Reception classes and the 'Inventions' project in Years 3 and 4. 'Entry Days' give good opportunities for pupils in all year groups to plan exciting activities to motivate learning in a range of subjects. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 made pizzas to sell in their café to start their topic on food, while Reception children went on an imaginary journey by aeroplane.

Pupils have regular and frequent opportunities to reflect on and celebrate their achievements. They have a clear understanding of all forms of bullying, and have a good awareness of cyber-bullying when using the internet. Active links with schools abroad result in pupils' good awareness of life beyond Britain. A varied range of after-school activities give pupils good opportunities to take part in a number of team sports and to follow their personal interests, including sewing, computer and Eco clubs.

Leadership and management

The established school vision, embraced by staff and pupils, is to 'reach for the stars'. A concerted drive to help pupils achieve as well as they can before they start secondary school is resulting in improving attainment across the school. Parents and carers correctly recognise that the curriculum meets their children's particular needs and interests well. Most feel well informed, and say that the school is approachable and takes notice of any concerns they may have. The school has good capacity to improve. Writing is a real success, and attainment in this aspect of English has improved well since the previous inspection. Boys and girls achieve equally well because topics are interesting. Time is given for pupils to write at length in a range of subjects.

The school promotes equal opportunities well by ensuring all pupils make good progress. Each pupil's progress is checked regularly, so that interventions can be instigated quickly. Support is monitored closely and changes made if provision is found not to be making a difference. Support for pupils struggling with reading in Years 1 and 2 has been particularly successful. There is no discrimination and all pupils have chance to take part in visits, including the proposed residential visit to the Isle of Wight by Year 6 pupils.

Strong leadership since the previous inspection has sustained performance in achievement, teaching and pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. The governing body are involved with staff in identifying challenging targets for improving pupils' achievement. Subsequent plans detail precisely what actions will be implemented, when and by whom, and are supported

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by effective professional development for the staff. The members of the governing body value taking learning walks with staff before each meeting. Alongside focused training, this has helped to purchase relevant resources and to ask the school challenging questions about performance. All safeguarding requirements are met and monitored closely by the school and governing body to ensure their consistent implementation.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Willows CofE Primary School, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 9QN

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school recently and for telling us so much about it, including through the questionnaires some of you filled in. We were impressed with your good manners. You told us that you feel safe because behaviour is good and incidents of bullying are rare. You join in enthusiastically with the varied and numerous projects, events and extra-curricular activities organised by the school.

The Willows is a good school. Your regular attendance shows that you enjoy school and want to achieve well. You particularly enjoy learning through investigations and practical activities. You make good progress because teaching is good, and because you try hard in lessons. You make excellent progress in some lessons when you are involved in planning and leading your learning, such as planning and taking part in the 'entry days' at the start of new topics. You have good communication, reading, writing, mathematics and computer skills to support your learning well.

Everyone in your school wants you to do well. Teachers have high expectations for your achievement. They ask you questions that help you to think of new ideas and to work out how to do things by yourselves. We have asked them to involve you more in planning your targets and in using them more often during lessons to help you make improvements independently. Teachers and teaching assistants support you well in lessons. We have asked them to check earlier and more frequently how well you understand what they have asked you to do in lessons, so that they can quickly give you any support and additional challenge you may need.

You can help by checking your work against your targets during lessons and asking your teachers what you need to do to reach any that are relevant. Thank you again for your welcome.

Yours sincerely

Georgina Beasley
Lead inspector

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