

Willowbrook School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	132778
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	381472
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Barron

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vicky Rollason
Headteacher	Molly Marlow
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 November 2009
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	8–9 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Barron

Additional inspector

Charlotte Roberson

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Peter Clifton

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 12 teachers. Five of these were joint observations with the headteacher or a member of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors heard pupils from Year 2, Year 3 and Year 6 read and made short observations of sessions on the teaching of phonics (pupils learning letter patterns and the sounds they represent). They held meetings with the headteacher, staff including senior leaders, members of the governing body, teaching assistants and pupils. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including school policies, development planning, pupils' work, and records of their learning and progress. They observed and discussed pupils' behaviour and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures. The inspectors analysed several completed questionnaires from staff and pupils as well as 59 from parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is an average size primary school. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or who have special educational needs is well above average. Most of this group have moderate learning difficulties or social and emotional needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also well above average. Most pupils are White British. An above average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages and many of this group are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school includes a specialist unit for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into either the school's Nursery or Reception Year class depending on their age. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has received several awards including Healthy School status.

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

- Willowbrook, satisfactory at its previous inspection, is now a good school. An overwhelming majority of parents and carers hold positive views about the school, especially the good quality of education it provides for their children. The school is not outstanding because the quality of teaching, though good overall and much improved since the previous inspection, is not yet outstanding.
- Pupils achieve well. They make good, if slightly uneven, progress from starting points that are below expected levels, especially regarding their communication and language skills. By Year 6, pupils' attainment is average in mathematics and English. However, attainment in writing is not as good as in reading. Pupils sometimes find it difficult to use the basic skills of punctuation and spelling successfully when completing longer pieces of written work in literacy lessons.
- Teachers usually ensure that lessons provide pupils with interesting and exciting activities that capture their interests and meet their varying learning needs well. The majority of teachers are able to assess the standard of pupils' work accurately and use this information to good effect in their lesson planning. However, this is not yet consistent throughout the school. A minority of teachers do not yet have the confidence or ability to accurately assess how well pupils are attaining.
- Pupils comment that they feel safe in school. They are well behaved and considerate to others. Any instances of unsocial behaviour are dealt with effectively by adults. Pupils enjoy school. Attitudes to learning are good and their attendance is improving.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. Staff morale is high and the quality of teamwork is strong. Self-evaluation is thorough, ongoing and rigorous. It is linked well to managing the performance of the school and continuing to improve the quality of teaching.

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What does the school need to do to improve further ?

- Improve pupils' attainment in writing to match their attainment in reading and mathematics by:
 - improving pupils' ability to use punctuation and spelling correctly when completing longer pieces of written work.
- Make sure, by July 2012, that all teachers have the confidence and ability to assess pupils' work correctly and use this assessment information effectively in their lesson planning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels well below those expected for their age. Their language and communication skills are particularly weak. Provision is good in both the Nursery and Reception Year classes. The learning environment is well resourced and classrooms are stimulating places. Adults ensure children have opportunities to develop their curiosity about the world around them. Teachers build up children's ability to work both with adult direction and through child-initiated tasks. As a result, children make good progress in both classes but many still enter Year 1 with lower than expected language and literacy skills, especially in writing.

Pupils continue to make good, if slightly uneven, progress in all other year groups. The school has put a lot of effort into ensuring that pupils are well prepared for eventual transfer to secondary education. Initiatives to improve pupils' progress have successfully ensured that attainment in Year 6 has risen rapidly. As a result, the gap between their performance and that of pupils nationally has narrowed significantly. Attainment in Year 6 is now comparable to the national average in mathematics and English, including reading. However, pupils agree that they have trouble using basic punctuation and spelling successfully when completing longer pieces of writing.

Pupils enjoy learning because lessons usually engage their interests well. The more-able pupils are encouraged to work to their full potential and those pupils requiring extra help with their learning, including pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs, as well as those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are well supported and make similar progress to all other pupils.

There is a focus throughout the school on building up pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy. Inspectors observed good-quality teaching of sounds and letters throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to use a wide range of strategies for

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decoding words when reading and this successfully builds up their confidence to try to read new words. Attainment in reading in Year 2 is comparable to the national average. Older pupils are able to discuss their work clearly and persuasively, and this was evident during a lesson when Year 6 pupils explained in detail and with conviction the reasons why the adverts they had designed to help sell a chocolate bar could persuade people to buy it.

Pupils display a growing understanding of number work in mathematics and this was evident in a Year 5 lesson when pupils made good progress developing their understanding of percentages because they found the work enjoyable and well matched to their different abilities and previous learning.

Parents and carers say that the school has improved during the last three years and believe that their children are achieving well. One parent and carer reflected the views of the vast majority with the comment, 'I am really pleased with the good level of progress that our children have made.' Another commented that she was 'really pleased with the progress of our children since they started at the school'. Inspectors agree with these views.

Quality of teaching

An overwhelming majority of parents and carers correctly believe that their children benefit from good teaching. Almost all teaching in the school is now of good or better quality and this aids learning well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. Lessons are designed to stimulate pupils' interests. They are usually well paced and the work pupils are set is usually well matched to their different abilities. The quality of teachers' marking is good and teachers' comments help pupils to improve. A scrutiny of pupils' work confirmed that the school has developed a curriculum which combines subjects well in order to make learning interesting and enjoyable. During an outstanding literacy lesson with the Year 6 class, the teacher linked work to the history of the Tudor period and this engaged pupils' interests really well. The lesson was planned meticulously and was very well matched to pupils' abilities and previous learning. As a result, all pupils worked extremely hard at writing about what life could have been like for people who settled in new lands. They made outstanding progress in developing both their understanding of this period in history and improving their writing skills.

Teachers' relationships with pupils are very good, and pupils say teachers are friendly and help them with their work if they have a problem. Teachers work well with effective teaching assistants to ensure that pupils requiring extra help with learning are well supported and so make the progress they are capable of. As a result, pupils display good attitudes to learning, enjoy school and work hard. Teachers ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, for example, by providing frequent opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs and small groups, and by rewarding good behaviour.

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However, very occasionally, pupils' progress is not as rapid as it could be in some lessons because teachers' plans do not always ensure that there is a good level of challenge for different groups of pupils. This is because a minority of teachers have yet to acquire the confidence and ability to assess pupils' work correctly and use this assessment information effectively in their lesson planning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school offers a welcoming and safe environment for pupils, who say that they get on well with each other. A majority of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed that, overall, behaviour is typically good, and inspectors endorse their views. A few expressed concerns about some aspects of pupils' behaviour. However, pupils say that behaviour is good in the school and has improved a lot during the last three years. This is reflected in the significant drop in pupil exclusions from 96 in the 2008/2009 academic year to zero since September 2011. Pupils are aware that a small minority of pupils still have difficulty in behaving well but say there is very little disruption in lessons because teachers always cope with this effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying and are well aware of potential internet safety issues such as cyberbullying. They also say that very rare instances of physical bullying occur in the school but that these have diminished as pupils' behaviour has improved. They are confident that the school deals with these quickly and firmly.

Parents and carers correctly believe that their children are safe in school and pupils, including those whose circumstances have made them potentially vulnerable, agree with this view. Pupils are confident that adults always deal well with any problems that they may encounter. One pupil commented, 'We all behave very well now because we are not bored anymore.' Attendance is average and continues to improve due to the effective measures adopted by the school. Punctuality is good and instances of persistent absence are reducing.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. Since her appointment, the headteacher has displayed the clarity, vigour and vision necessary to drive school improvement. She has worked well with the staff and the governing body to introduce more rigour to the school's monitoring and evaluation processes. These are now linked well to managing the performance of the school and monitoring the quality of teaching. The school has worked hard to ensure that all pupils are given equal opportunities to succeed and any rare instances of discrimination are tackled effectively. Governance is good. The governing body is well informed and supportive, and offers the school an effective level of challenge when required. Governors play a full and active role in school life and fulfil their statutory duties well.

The school's relationship with parents and carers is good. They appreciate the way the school keeps them well informed and involved in their children's learning.

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Resources are good and used well to enhance learning. Links with outside agencies are used effectively to support pupils' learning and well-being. Safeguarding procedures are good and meet all requirements. Staff and governors are well aware of the importance of their role in protecting pupils and receive regular training about safeguarding issues.

The staff work closely together as a team and morale is high. They know that their opinions are valued and that the school has a commitment to continuing professional training to support their development as teachers. The curriculum is good. It provides pupils with structured opportunities to develop new skills and use them successfully in different contexts. It also successfully promotes pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Improvements since the previous inspection in the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and the effectiveness of leadership and management provide a clear indication that the school has a good capacity to secure further improvement.

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.



12 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willowbrook School, Exeter EX4 8NN

Thank you for making us all so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing you work hard in lessons. We also enjoyed hearing you singing so well in assembly.

You say that the school has got better over the last few years and believe you now attend a good school. We agree with you.

Here are some of the things we found out about your school.

- You attend a happy and friendly school which gives you a good start to your education in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- You then make good, if slightly uneven, progress throughout the rest of the school.
- You enjoy school and get on well with each other.
- You feel safe at school and behave well.
- You are all sure that adults will always help you if you have a problem.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are all working hard to make the school even better.

We have asked your school to help you to improve your writing, especially when you try to write longer pieces of work. We have also asked them to make sure that all the teachers are able to work out exactly how well each of you are making progress and then plan lessons that will help you make better progress in future.

Your school has improved since the last time it was inspected. All of you can help it to improve even more by coming to school as often as you can and by working as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Michael Barron
Lead inspector

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