

Willow Bank Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109890
Local Authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	356648
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Davies
Headteacher	Joe Moyster
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 17 lessons or part lessons taught by 11 different teachers. The inspection team examined the school's policies, assessments, pupils' work, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. It held discussions with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and pupils, and had informal conversations with parents and carers. The inspectors analysed 98 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and others by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- To what extent are more-able pupils challenged so they can achieve as well as they can?
 - What action is the school taking, and how effective is it, to improve pupils' performance in writing?
 - How good is the provision for science and how well are pupils achieving in this subject?
- ◆ To what extent are leaders and managers at all levels successfully evaluating performance and taking effective action to raise pupils' achievement?

Information about the school

Most pupils in this average size school are from a White British heritage. A much lower than average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities. The nature of these difficulties is mostly moderate learning difficulties. ◆ The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school has received a number of awards including Basic Skills, Healthy Schools and Sportsmark. During the past two years, the headteacher has also been executive headteacher of another primary school in the area. He returned full time to Willow Bank Junior in September 2010.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Willow Bank Junior provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Care, guidance and support make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. However, inconsistent progress in some subjects and for the more able means that their achievement is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in pupils' extremely courteous, friendly and helpful attitudes to others. Behaviour is often exemplary in lessons and around the school, but this does not always translate into high quality learning. Pupils feel safe and show an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. ♦Community cohesion is promoted well and pupils make very good contributions to the school and to the wider community. Attendance levels are consistently high. While the school has many strengths, particularly in terms of pupils' personal outcomes, pupils could be doing better academically.

Pupils make satisfactory progress from their above average starting points on entry to the school. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average but there has been variation between subject areas. While attainment in mathematics and reading is significantly above average, attainment in writing and science has been closer to average during the past two years. Not enough pupils have attained the higher levels in writing and science. The school is tackling the writing issue well and this is having a positive impact on pupils' performance. In science, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to plan, carry out and report on investigations of their own. Teaching is not consistently effective enough to promote good progress for most pupils. Teachers establish very good relationships with their classes. In the most successful lessons, pupils are challenged well and learning is maintained at a good pace. In others, tasks are not sufficiently well tailored to pupils' needs, particularly the more able. Learning can slow with overlong teacher introductions. ♦An interesting curriculum has been developed. It is enriched by a first-rate range of additional activities. Provision for music and sport is a clear strength in this school.

The headteacher, with his staff, effectively promotes good quality care and very positive personal outcomes for pupils, but academic outcomes have not always kept pace. The school has a clear understanding of its strengths. It has correctly identified the most pressing areas for improvement through systematic self-evaluation. Senior staff have rightly identified that pupils' attainment and progress need to be improved. Positive action is being taken to improve pupils' performance in writing. Given these positive moves to improve the progress of pupils, the school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for further development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in science by the end of Year 6 to at least above average and accelerate pupils progress by:
 - - increasing opportunities for pupils to plan and carry out practical investigations.
 - - providing opportunities for pupils to plan and organise their own work when reporting their investigations.
- Consolidate the developments made to improve pupils' confidence in writing to raise attainment to at least above average by the end of Year 6.
- Improve teaching and pupils' progress from satisfactory to good by:
 - using assessment more effectively to match tasks to pupils' abilities, particularly the more able
 - ensuring that learning and the lesson proceed at a quick pace.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most year groups enter Year 3 with above average attainment. Pupils enjoy their experiences at school and show positive attitudes to learning. They spoke enthusiastically about their learning in lessons and their participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided. Their comments to the inspectors included, 'We can learn a lot' and 'Sporting activities are really good'. National test results, school assessments, pupils' work and the lessons seen indicate that attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average. Most pupils, including the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory, but not the good progress of which they are capable. Pupils' achievement is therefore satisfactory.

By Year 6, pupils are confident and articulate speakers. They respond well to teachers' questioning by expressing their ideas and opinions. Opportunities in lessons are sometimes missed for pupils to discuss their work in pairs or small groups. Pupils' reading skills are well developed. Their performance in writing is improving because of the positive action being taken by the school, but nonetheless it remains a weaker aspect of their English skills. Pupils write for a range of purposes and in different styles. They write clear, factual reports, and write interesting reviews of books expressing their favourite characters and parts. In a high quality English lesson in Year 6, pupils wrote colourful and imaginative character descriptions. Handwriting was clear, fluent and joined. Pupils' performance in mathematics has been more consistent than other key areas. Attainment in this subject is significantly above average. More-able pupils are challenged effectively so a significantly above average proportion of pupils attain the higher than expected Level 5. In science, pupils make satisfactory progress. By Year 6, they show a good knowledge and understanding of areas such as food chains, food pyramids and microbes. Their scientific skills of planning and designing investigations are not developed sufficiently well.

Pupils demonstrate a very good awareness and understanding of different cultures and faiths. ♦ All pupils choose healthy foods and participate enthusiastically in a wide range of physical and sporting activities. They feel well cared for at school and are confident that there are always trusted adults they can turn to if they are worried or need help. Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities such as serving on the school council, or acting

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as peer mediators. The school council has made valuable contributions to improving playground facilities. Pupils support those less fortunate than themselves by raising funds for a range of appeals and charities. The choir and orchestra perform in the local community. Their personal and social skills are extremely well developed as is their confidence in speaking, listening, number work and reading, which means they are well prepared for their future lives and education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

There are pockets of good and outstanding practice, but much of the teaching is typically satisfactory. The purpose of the lesson is effectively shared with the class so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers establish positive relationships with their class and manage them very well. In a number of lessons, teachers used humour constructively to motivate the pupils' learning. Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and informative and questioning is used well to check pupils' understanding. On occasions, activities and tasks are not always challenging enough, particularly for more-able pupils as assessment information is not used consistently well to plan teaching. In some lessons, pupils' work is over directed by the teacher and they are not given sufficient opportunities to plan and organise their own work. Teaching assistants are suitably deployed and provide clear guidance and support for pupils who need it. Praise is given for good work

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and there are constructive comments in teachers' marking to help pupils improve. However, there are a few incidents where marking is too irregular to be useful.

The curriculum contributes very well to pupils' personal development. Positive steps have been taken to improve provision for writing, but the promotion of scientific skills is not well developed. Good links between subjects add meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. Music is a strength of the curriculum with good opportunities for pupils to learn to play a musical instrument and perform in the choir or orchestra. French contributes well to pupils' language and cultural development. Health education and the range of sports activities provided contribute extremely well to pupils' healthy lifestyles. As a parent correctly commented, 'Music and sporting opportunities are fabulous.' An exceptional range of additional activities are provided. These are much appreciated by parents and carers and thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils. A parent summed up the views of a number, 'After-school clubs are exceptional, they are varied and offer different experiences.' Popular clubs range from archery, art and climbing, to dance and tennis. A successful residential visit to Wales for Year 5 provides exciting outdoor activities and helps to build team and social skills. ♦

Good care, guidance and support are appreciated and recognised by pupils, parents and carers. A parent wrote, 'Lovely school, caring and supportive'. ♦ Staff know the pupils well and establish strong relationships with them. There are good induction and transition arrangements which help to ensure that Year 3 pupils and those joining later settle quickly. Clear expectations by all staff and consistently implemented procedures lead to outstanding behaviour and relationships. The school successfully promotes high attendance. ♦

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, other key leaders and staff successfully drive pupils' good care and personal development, but the focus upon their academic development has lagged behind. Leaders have planned an interesting curriculum which results in pupils having a broad range of learning experiences. Monitoring of teaching is systematic, but there is not sufficient emphasis on improving shortcomings in practice. As a result, teaching is satisfactory rather than consistently good. Key subject leaders are appropriately involved in evaluating performance and improvement planning. Positive action is being taken to improve pupils' writing. However, planning is not always sharply focused on the most pressing academic priorities.

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Members of the governing body have a clear understanding of the school's strengths, particularly the strong personal outcomes for pupils. Governors are less well informed about the school's areas for improvement, particularly in terms of pupils' progress to ensure that it is always good. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties. There are satisfactory procedures to protect and safeguard pupils and statutory requirements are met. Elements of safeguarding, including those raised by parents and carers, have been discussed with the school with a view to ensuring that all procedures are good or better. ♦♦♦

Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily and discrimination is tackled very well but these areas are not stronger because not all pupils have equal access to consistently good provision. Community cohesion is successfully promoted through the school's positive links with the local and wider community. Different cultures and faiths are promoted well through the school's curriculum. Developing partnerships with organisations abroad are helping to broaden pupils' horizons effectively.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Over a third of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. Almost all parents and carers who returned them are happy with their children's experience at the school. They are particularly pleased with their children's sense of enjoyment and the range of extra-curricular activities provided. The inspection team supports these positive views. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concern about pupils' progress, the school taking account of their suggestions and concerns, the help the school gives in assisting parents and carers in supporting their children's learning and aspects of leadership and management. Inspectors have noted that pupils make satisfactory, rather than good, progress as senior leaders promote positive personal outcomes for pupils, but not always

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academic. This means the impact of leadership and management on teaching and pupils' progress is satisfactory, but it is improving. ♦The school strives to improve its communication with parents and carers in order to address their concerns and suggestions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Willow Bank Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 233 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	61	35	36	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	42	49	50	7	7	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	27	67	68	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	34	48	49	14	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	39	52	53	7	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	31	52	53	15	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	33	58	59	8	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	29	55	56	7	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	26	63	64	9	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	28	56	57	6	6	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	17	59	60	13	13	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	19	19	61	62	13	13	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	39	53	54	6	6	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



5 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willow Bank Junior School, Reading RG5 4RW

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school, giving us your views and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we have found. Your school is satisfactory. There are some good and even outstanding features. ♦

These are the school's main strengths.

- You really enjoy school and your attendance is high.
- Standards in reading and mathematics are above average by Year 6.
- A good range of learning activities is provided including clubs and visits. ♦
- You get on extremely well with each other and behaviour is often outstanding.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.
- You feel safe at school because teachers and other adults take good care of you and provide good guidance and support.
- You make outstanding contributions to the school and to the wider community.

We have asked the headteacher and teachers to do a few things to improve areas of the school's work.

- You could make more progress in science and reach higher standards by having more opportunities to plan, carry out and report practical investigations.
- Some of you could reach higher standards in writing and the school is taking action to help this happen.
- Some of you could be making better progress in lessons. We have asked the teachers to match the work more carefully to your abilities, especially those of you who find learning easy and ensure that learning and the lesson move along more quickly.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard, particularly in writing and science. ♦ We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts Lead inspector

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