

Willowbank Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113119
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357267
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phillip Daniel
Headteacher	Simon Atherton
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, observed nine teachers and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Talks were held informally with parents and carers before the start of the school day. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at policies, pupils' books, safeguarding records and evidence of monitoring of teaching and learning. They also scrutinised questionnaires from 100 pupils and 61 parents and carers.

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

- Whether the pupils' attainment is high enough in Key Stage 2, especially in writing.
- How well the pupils, including the school council, are involved in the decision-making processes in the school.
- How well the school develops the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural skills, especially their understanding of their own and others' cultures.
- To what degree the school promotes community cohesion effectively across all three strands.
- How effectively the school has developed the learning environment, especially for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Most pupils at Willowbank are of White British heritage, although there is a small number from other ethnic heritages. A higher-than-average number of pupils are learning English as an additional language, though none is at the early stages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The number of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the number with statements of special educational needs. The school has recently received the International Schools' Award at the intermediate level and the Healthy Schools' Award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Willowbank is a good school. It is run effectively by the headteacher, senior managers and the governing body. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and robust and the staff, parents and carers, governing body and pupils are involved in the process. The school has demonstrated a good capacity for sustained improvement by raising pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2 consistently over the last three years. The pupils now make much better progress than before and their attainment continues to rise in literacy and numeracy. Substantial improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and care of the pupils which are all now good. The leaders' determination for continued improvement is shared by the governing body, teachers, support staff and the pupils themselves. Parents and carers say that the school has improved a great deal over the last five years.

Overall, the pupils achieve well in nearly all aspects of their learning. They clearly enjoy school and speak positively about their work. Nearly all parents and carers say that their children enjoy school and the pupils say they that know who to go to when they need help. The pupils' attainment in Year 6 is average overall, but it is above average and rising in Years 2, 4 and 5. The pupils' writing is interesting, with many examples of creative retelling of stories and detailed factual accounts. The best work is found in Years 2, 4 and 5; however, the pupils' writing skills are relatively weaker in Year 6. The pupils demonstrate good information and communication technology skills, but the opportunities they have to use these in lessons and across the curriculum are, occasionally, limited. The learning environment has been developed well inside the school, but the outdoor provision, especially for the youngest children, is still developing.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are well developed because they participate in a wide range of activities in school and in the local community. However, their understanding of the various cultures represented in Britain today is limited. The pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and take part in many sporting activities. The school council is active and the pupils say that it provides a 'voice' for them to make suggestions about improving the school. In the positive atmosphere, the teaching engages all pupils successfully and there is a good mix of teacher-led and child-initiated learning. This is particularly the case in the youngest classes, where all practitioners engage the children successfully in a wide range of activities. The adapted curriculum meets the range and abilities of pupils well, resulting in all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, making good progress. The teachers ensure individuals with specific learning difficulties have work that is personalised to their needs. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are integrated well into the school and make good progress in their acquisition of English. The level of care, guidance and support is good, especially for those pupils experiencing most difficulty because the teachers know the pupils so well. The effective engagement of parents and

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carers and good partnerships with other schools, the local authority and agencies are beneficial for the pupils and their families.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by improving the pupils' writing skills, especially in Year 6 through more focused teaching of basic spelling, punctuation and handwriting skills.
- Improve the school's contribution to community cohesion by increasing the pupils' understanding of cultural diversity and what it is like to live in other parts of the United Kingdom through developing links with contrasting schools.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The children enter the Reception Year with skills levels and knowledge below those expected for their age, especially their communication, language and literacy skills. They make good progress, so that, by the time they enter Year 1, most achieve average attainment. Current school data and the pupils' current work indicate that the pupils' attainment is above average and rising in Years 2, 4 and 5 and is broadly in line and rising in Year 3 and Year 6. For example, pupils in Year 2 wrote detailed instructions about how to produce a papier mch bowl and used a good range of descriptive words. All of the indicators show that the pupils' progress is improving quickly. More able pupils make good progress also because of the challenging work they are given.

The overwhelming majority of pupils say they feel safe in school and strongly affirm that there is no bullying and that pupils get on with each other amicably. Behaviour is good and individual pupils support each other well. Playtimes are enjoyable experiences because older pupils organise and supervise games effectively. The pupils play a central role in the local community; an example of this is the school Nativity Play that took place during the inspection, which was very well attended by parents, carers and local residents. The pupils also take responsibility for raising funds for local, national and international charities. Their good personal development helps them to act responsibly in and around the school; this, their good grasp of basic numeracy and well-developed reading skills ensure they have an appropriate range of skills that contribute to their future well-being. However, a few older pupils need some support when carrying out problem-solving activities. The pupils show a good understanding of the faiths represented in the school and are developing their own views accordingly. They have a good sense of right and wrong and most obey the school rules diligently. Attendance is good and nearly all pupils are punctual.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

Throughout the school, the teaching is interesting, stimulating and demonstrates a good range of techniques. Lessons are challenging and good use is made of interactive whiteboards to engage the pupils in their learning. The teaching assistants provide valuable in-class and small group support. All staff, including the teaching assistants, make good use of questioning to extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Assessment is used effectively to track the pupils' progress at an individual level. However, although the pupils are well aware of their targets, their self-assessment is sometimes inaccurate and the teachers do not always challenge the pupils to refine their opinions. Marking is supportive and usually identifies what the pupils need to improve well.

The 'themed' curriculum engages the pupils successfully in learning. It has been designed with input from the pupils and they are now much more involved in the decision-making processes of the school. The good emphasis on improving the pupils' writing skills through such initiatives as the 'big write' is as yet too recent to have had a significant impact on the pupils' attainment in Year 6. Data analysis has been used effectively to adjust the curriculum for those needing extra support or specific programmes to help them learn. The curriculum takes account also of the range of different cultures and beliefs in the school and festivals such as Diwali are celebrated.

The good arrangements for the care of pupils and good quality advice and guidance contribute to their good development and the pupils say that they feel well prepared for

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their next school. The programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or difficulties ensure they are supported well. The youngest children are well cared for and settle quickly into the daily routines.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 communicates high expectations consistently to the staff about securing improvement. He is supported well by the assistant headteacher and other managers. All staff are enthusiastic about improving the school. Target setting is realistic and accurate; the school met its targets for English and mathematics in 2010. As a result, the outcomes for pupils are good and improving. Planning for improvement is effective and involves the local authority and other significant partners. It is based on robust evidence and accurate analysis of data. The managers have tackled key areas of weakness in teaching systematically and this has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and a rise in attainment at both key stages.

The governing body discharges its statutory responsibilities well. It pays regular monitoring visits to the school and supports the staff and pupils effectively. It knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school and understands the challenges it faces. It is directly involved in setting appropriate priorities for improvement through the monitoring of the school's improvement plan and the headteacher's performance management targets.

Parents and carers say that they are kept well informed about their children's achievement, well-being and development. The school has a positive relationship with most and especially those from different language groups. Letters to parents and carers are written in Polish where necessary, for example. The school asks parents and carers for their views regularly and the information is used to influence the school's decision-making process. A range of other partnership activities makes a strong contribution to the pupils' achievement and well-being, but links with the local secondary school are not yet as strong as others. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and has effective strategies for supporting pupils who may be subject to any discrimination; this is demonstrated in the school's harmonious relations and atmosphere. All safeguarding regulations and duties are met. The teachers know well which pupils are most in need of support and give priority to safeguarding their welfare. All staff are suitably trained and have the skills and expertise required.

The school promotes community cohesion actively in the school community and reaches out to other communities. It has worked hard to develop links with schools in other

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countries and has recently been given the International Schools Award for its efforts. However, links with other schools in the United Kingdom are underdeveloped and the pupils' understanding of life in other parts of the country is limited as a result. Several outcomes for pupils are good and no major shortcomings are evident in the use or management of resources; as a result, the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a strong foundation for the children's start in education and its overall effectiveness is good. Behaviour is good because the children enjoy learning and take part enthusiastically in the activities provided. The children are given a good range of activities to choose from and the staff direct them appropriately as they learn. As a result, they make good progress, some from quite low starting points. The children's welfare is paramount and the practitioners ensure that the children are kept safe. Parents and carers are kept very well informed about their children's progress through regular contacts. The teaching is imaginative and uses a good range of suitable practice. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed and led and all practitioners contribute to its smooth running. Parents and carers say that their children love coming to school and are excited about what they will learn. Generally, good use is made of resources and the indoor areas are bright, attractive and exciting places to learn. However, the outdoor area is not as well maintained and some equipment is in need of replacement.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. All say that the school keeps their children safe and that the teaching is good. Also, they all agree that the school teaches their children to lead a healthy lifestyle and meets their children's needs well. A few parents and carers felt that the school did not help them to support their children's learning. The inspection evidence endorses parents' and carers' positive views. However, It does not endorse the view that parents and carers are not helped to support their children's learning, as there was evidence of good systems in place to do so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Willowbank Primary 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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 202 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	64	21	34	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	67	20	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	25	45	74	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	51	28	46	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	53	29	48	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	46	29	48	4	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	33	41	67	0	0	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)	18	30	35	57	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	43	33	54	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	44	31	51	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	28	39	64	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	31	38	62	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	56	25	41	1	2	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.



10 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willowbank Primary School, Cullompton EX15 1EZ

Thank you so much for making us welcome at your school. Yours is a good school and you are clearly very proud of it. I want especially to thank the school council, who spoke to us about the school. You answered our questions very well and clearly enjoy your school very much. We were pleased to see the way you play and work together so well and help those who are finding things a little difficult sometimes. Nearly all of you said you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve your work.

Willowbank is a good school and there are a number of things that we liked particularly.

- You are all making good progress in mathematics and reading.
- The teachers and helpers work hard to make your lessons interesting.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body make sure the school is well run.
- The youngest children enjoy learning a lot and have a great start to their education.
- You know a lot about how to be healthy and to keep yourselves safe.

These are the things we have asked the school to work on:

- To help you to be even better at writing, especially those of you who are in Year 6.
- To give you more opportunities to learn about what it is like to live in different parts of the United Kingdom and what people in these areas believe and think.

All of you can help by taking extra care when you write and present your work. You can also find out about other parts of the country and perhaps talk to pupils from other schools. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Dennett

Lead Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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