

Willen Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110388
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	356728
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Hugh Protherough

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	371
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Neilson
Headteacher	Michele Mellor
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed a total of 24 lessons and 17 teachers. They analysed the school's work, including samples of pupils' work, documents such as the school improvement plan, curriculum and lesson planning, and the tracking of pupil progress. They analysed the responses from 176 parent and carer questionnaires as well as those from staff and pupils. Inspectors met with parents and carers, members of the governing body and staff. In addition to informal conversations in lessons, they held meetings with the school council and groups of pupils from Years 2 and 6.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The profile of pupils' achievements and especially that of the girls in mathematics, higher attainers and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The extent to which work in lessons is well matched to the abilities of the pupils and whether the feedback provided by teachers helps them to improve their work.
- How leaders and managers ensure high quality teaching and learning and demonstrate a secure capacity to improve pupil outcomes.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Although most pupils come from the local community, an increasing number travel from further afield. Most pupils are of White British origin but the range of other groups has continued to increase and is slightly above the national average. They include pupils from White, other background, Asian or Asian British Indian, Asian or Asian British Pakistani, Black or Black British African backgrounds. Although many of these pupils speak more than one language, few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties is below the national average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. This includes pupils with moderate learning difficulties, speech and language needs and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A new headteacher was appointed last year and has been at the school since September 2010.

An independent provider runs care clubs before and after school each day. This provision was inspected at the same time as the school.

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

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Many of the strengths identified in the previous inspection report have been sustained. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to school and attendance is high. They behave well and feel safe and well cared for. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Over the past two years, pupils' performance in the Year 6 national tests has fallen steeply from being comfortably above the national average to broadly average in English, and below average in mathematics. In 2010, boys attained results that were better than those of the girls, and especially in mathematics. Too many pupils failed to make the progress expected from their starting points at the end of Year 2. Inspectors' analysis of pupils' current work shows that, since September, progress has started to accelerate throughout the school, especially in mathematics and for all groups of pupils. Attainment is rising and progress is satisfactory.

The reason for this improvement lies in the rapid and accurate evaluation of the school made by the headteacher and her deputy and the decisive actions taken to drive improvement. The progress of individual pupils is tracked with rigour and staff are held to account for the performance of their pupils at regular pupil-progress meetings. Samples of pupils' work are checked and lessons monitored. The results of these activities are shared with staff and findings used to inform an ambitious but realistic school improvement plan. The work of middle leaders is at an early stage of development. They have responded positively to the increased expectations for their role, but have yet to develop a secure oversight of their subject responsibilities across the school. The school has a satisfactory and growing capacity to improve.

The school's effective self-evaluation of its provision matches closely that of the inspectors. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, but not enough is good. Teachers plan conscientiously and frequently enliven learning with practical activities that motivate the pupils. A good range of cross-curricular activities also help bring learning alive and enable pupils to practise the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in other subjects. Despite thorough planning, work is not always matched closely enough to pupils' abilities. Sensible amendments to the school's marking policy have seen some improvement, but pupils are not always clear about what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve their work. ♦

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment, and especially that of the girls in mathematics, so that results in the national tests return to above average. A good result for 2011 would be 90% of pupils attaining Level 4 or higher and 36% attaining Level 5.
- Embed recent improvements to teaching so that more lessons are of consistently good quality by ensuring:
 - work is always closely matched to pupils' abilities .
 - pupils know how well they have done in their work and what they need to do to improve it.
- Increase the effectiveness of middle leaders so that they have a secure oversight of pupils' progress and provision across the school by:
 - analysing test and assessment data .
 - evaluating the quality of pupils' work .
 - modelling effective teaching across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Throughout the school pupils show a strong commitment to learning. Their attendance and punctuality are excellent. They respond enthusiastically to all that the school offers and are confident that they are safe. Pupils are proud of the diversity of their school community and extremely knowledgeable about the many cultures and languages represented. Pupils of all backgrounds get on noticeably well. They think deeply about their experiences and by Year 6 talk perceptively about changes at their school and their imminent transition to secondary education. Opportunities for quiet reflection in daily worship are very well observed and pupils show considerable interest in and understanding of the opinions and beliefs of others.

Inspectors' analysis of pupils' work confirms that the attainment of the current Year 6 is higher than that in 2010 and that overall achievement is satisfactory. Many pupils are already working within the levels expected of 11-year-olds nationally and a growing number exceed these in both English and mathematics. The progress of all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is accelerating and pupils are making satisfactory gains from their starting points at the end of Year 2.

Recent improvements in mathematics are partly a result of the successful ways teachers are motivating pupils through practical and investigative activities. The estimation and measurement of angles in Year 6 improved considerably as a result of effective demonstration, good resources and increasingly challenging questions. Year 5 made a successful start on probability by ranking the likelihood of events such as 'it will snow tomorrow' and 'a dragon will appear on the playground'. Humour captured the pupils' interest and the teacher's subsequent questions deepened learning. Conversations with pupils show that most are pleased by their achievements. Their work in subjects such as history, science, information and communication technology and art reflects this sense of pleasure and growing success. However, pupils' capacity to evaluate their work and their knowledge of how it can be improved are less firmly established.

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Pupils have a good appreciation of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle and most take part in additional physical activities outside the school day. They are keen to take on additional responsibilities and offer a polite and courteous welcome to visitors.

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	3
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	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	3
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?

Good relationships between staff and pupils support a positive ethos for learning. Most lessons proceed at a steady pace because teachers' classroom management skills and subject knowledge are secure. Lessons are often enlivened by practical activities and a good variety of resources that enhance pupils' understanding. The frequent use of 'talk partners' supports the development of pupils' speaking and listening effectively. Occasionally, the introductions go on for too long and pupils, though well behaved, find it hard to sustain their concentration. On these occasions teachers sometimes miss opportunities for pupils to pursue the investigations or independent work of which they are capable. Although lesson plans are detailed and identify appropriate objectives, the match of work to pupils' abilities is not always sharp enough and the pace of learning slows. Teaching assistants frequently make valuable contributions in supporting vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. At its best the impact of this work is considerable, enabling pupils such as those with low self-esteem or poor concentration to work alongside their peers and enjoy success in meeting their targets.

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Teachers are making more accurate assessment of pupils' work, but are not yet using this knowledge consistently to drive forward learning. Marking is supportive and tells pupils when they have met the lesson objective but does not always show them the next steps in learning. Approaches to ensuring that work is corrected and improved are inconsistent.

The school's curriculum offers a good range of learning opportunities that interest and motivate the pupils. Curriculum planning makes helpful links between subjects so that pupils have regular opportunities to apply the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in a variety of settings. The Saxon Day held during the inspection enabled Year 4 pupils to gain good insights into Saxon life working as archaeologists, researching Saxon names and lifestyle as well as cooking a typical meal. Their enjoyment was evident throughout and one pupil was heard to observe, 'That didn't seem like learning, it was so much fun!' Pupils also value the wide range of extra-curricular clubs, educational visits and links with a school in Spain.

Good attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. The school provides a welcoming environment that celebrates pupils' work. Effective links with parents and carers and a range of agencies such as health, and other services ensure prompt support for vulnerable pupils. Pupils also say they appreciate the care clubs they attend before and after school.

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 and her deputy are highly motivated, have made incisive evaluation of the school and know exactly what needs to be improved. Arrangements for assessment have been consolidated so that the progress of individual pupils is tracked in good detail. The effective support for vulnerable pupils and the narrowing gap in the achievements of girls and boys in numeracy are further good examples of how the school takes concerted action to promote equality of opportunity and ensure there is no discrimination. A good start has been made in using this information as the basis for discussions with teachers about the progress of their pupils. Inspectors' conversations with staff and analysis of their questionnaires suggest a shared commitment to driving improvement and a growing appreciation of the need to focus more sharply on pupils' outcomes.

The development of a new leadership team is under way. Subject and phase leaders are skilled practitioners who, with the support of the headteacher, are being trained in those analytical skills that will enable them to develop a more accurate view of their areas of responsibility throughout the school.

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The governing body is strongly supportive and their recruitment of a new and experienced headteacher successfully involved staff, parents, carers and pupils. Since the last inspection they have systematically improved their engagement in the life of the school and ensured they meet and review all of their statutory requirements.

However, the impact of their challenge has, until very recently, been limited. Close working with the headteacher has raised their understanding of school performance data so that there is a clearer appreciation of how the school needs to be held to account.

The school adopts a robust approach to safeguarding arrangements, in line with government requirements, and reviews these systematically. The school helps pupils to keep themselves safe and is particularly successful in its support of vulnerable pupils and their families. Recent alterations have improved security on the large site and consideration is being given to improving this further through the use of cameras and new technologies.

Plans to promote community cohesion are appropriate and reflect a good understanding of the local context. However, despite good links with a school in Spain, approaches to building pupils' knowledge of communities in the United Kingdom beyond Milton Keynes are less firmly established.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle swiftly into the world of school because they have close and trusting relationships with the staff. They arrive happily with their parents each morning and show great confidence in daily routines.

Staff planning is thorough and detailed. It ensures a good mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. For instance, the teacher's reading of the story *Where the Wild Things*

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Are fired the imagination of the children. Skilful questioning enabled them to talk about the story and use their knowledge of the sounds of letters to read key words. Subsequently they made good gains in speaking and listening through role play and using puppets to act out parts of the story.

Indoors, children select equipment and resources and use them thoughtfully when directing their own work. They show increasing ability to work for an extended period to follow through their ideas and collaborate well with each other. Although the outside classroom is more limited in scope, the children make good use of it because adults recognise its importance and plan appropriately. Following recent improvements to security, plans are afoot to enhance further the opportunities for creative and investigative activity in this area.

The data for last year's Reception children indicate that they made good progress from their starting points, which were broadly average for their age. By the end of the year the proportion working securely at average standards across the six areas of learning was slightly above the national average. The current cohort is making good progress. The majority is on course to be working securely within and beyond age-related expectations by July. Teachers ensure effective support for the few children who struggle with communication, language and literacy, and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy so that they too make good progress.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led. Close teamwork and the effective deployment of teaching assistants ensure assessment arrangements are thorough and used to ensure day-to-day planning meets the needs of children. Recent consultation with parents and carers suggests that most are happy with their child's experience of school. Even so, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader is making appropriate plans to improve induction arrangements, for instance, the introduction of home visits to build further the links with families and engage them in supporting their children's learning.

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

At 47%, the proportion of questionnaire returns is above the national average. The large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires and spoke to inspectors are pleased with their children's experience of school. A few expressed concerns about some aspects of the school's work and these mostly focused on the quality of information and their children's progress. Inspectors agree that in the recent past, pupils have not always made good enough progress. A sharper focus on tracking individuals and groups and the headteacher's insistence on regular review meetings with individual teachers means that

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this is an improving picture. Since her arrival the headteacher has introduced curriculum meetings for parents and carers and there is useful detail about what pupils are studying on the school website. There are appropriate plans to build on these initiatives and improve further the quality of information available to parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Willen 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 176 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 371 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	80	45	84	48	8	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	76	43	94	53	4	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	23	102	58	28	16	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	23	105	60	22	13	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	44	25	109	62	11	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	22	111	63	16	9	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	22	124	70	5	3	2	1
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)	33	19	106	60	10	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	20	108	61	17	10	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	24	110	63	16	9	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	20	100	57	16	9	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	41	23	106	60	14	8	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	30	104	59	12	7	3	2

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



9 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willen Primary School, Milton Keynes, MK15 9HN

Thank you very much for your friendly welcome during the recent inspection of your school. It was a pleasure to meet you all and to see your school community getting on so well together. We think that the way you respect each other and talk intelligently about the things that are important to you is outstanding. You gave us lots of examples of how you stay fit and healthy and most of you are. Your attendance and punctuality are excellent.

Overall, we think your school offers you a satisfactory education. This is because over the past couple of years the Year 6 test results have not been quite as good as they used to be and some pupils haven't made enough progress. The current Year 6 are doing better. They told me that they have noticed some changes since your new headteacher arrived in September and, although one or two of you are nostalgic about the past, the inspectors agree with the changes your teachers are making.

We'd like teachers to help you make faster progress, especially the girls in mathematics, by:

- setting you work that isn't too easy, nor too hard, but takes you on to the next step in your learning.
- telling you how well you've done and how your work can be improved.

In the meantime the senior teachers, with the help of the governors, are going to keep a close eye on how things are going. They are aiming to make this school not just satisfactory, but good. Together you can help make it happen!

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough

Lead inspector

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