

# The Willows Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135213
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	375447
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Russell HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector the authority to cause any school in England to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	202
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Hilary Purton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alexandra Butler
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17–18 March 2010
<b>School address</b>	Pyle Hill Berkshire RG14 7SJ
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<b>Inspection number</b>	375447

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Eleven lessons were observed, taught by nine teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, parents, staff and governors. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation.

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

- Whether pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress.
- Whether developments in the school's curriculum are supporting improvements in pupils' achievement and enjoyment.
- Whether improvements in aspects of care, guidance and support have led to sustained improvements in behaviour and attendance.
- Whether there have been further improvements in the school's leadership and management, particularly in middle leadership and governance.

## Information about the school

The Willows is an average-sized primary school. The school was opened as a Fresh Start school in April 2006. On its first full inspection in 2010 it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on three occasions. At the last monitoring inspection the school was judged to be making good progress.

The headteacher works as an executive headteacher across two schools, typically spending three days a week at The Willows. A school improvement board was set up in June 2010 to temporarily undertake the responsibilities of the governing body. A new governing body was gradually formed and trained during the year and members of the board now form the core of the newly constituted governing body.

The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language have increased in the past year and are now close to national averages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average; these pupils' main difficulties are moderate learning difficulties, or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils join or leave the school during the school year.

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The Willows is now a good school. It has improved rapidly in the past 18 months, particularly over the past term.

Pupils across the school are now making good progress and attainment is rising rapidly. These improvements are largely the result of better teaching, although precisely targeted support for individual pupils also helps them to make rapid progress. However, while good overall, a minority of teaching is no better than satisfactory. This is usually because the lesson moves too slowly and pupils therefore do not make as much progress as they could.

Pupils are well cared for and supported. A range of strengths in the curriculum, not least the wide range of enrichment activities, helps to motivate and excite pupils; these activities also make a strong contribution to their personal development. Consequently, almost all of pupils' outcomes are now good. Behaviour, for example, has improved considerably and is now good in the large majority of lessons and around the site. As a result, the school is now a calm, happy and pleasant place to be. However, attendance, while improving rapidly, remains low when compared to national averages. This inevitably affects some pupils' achievement and their future life chances.

This rapid improvement would not have been possible without the headteacher's high standards, clear direction and compelling sense of purpose. She has galvanised the staff, who now share her high expectations and ambition for The Willows. She has also strengthened the effectiveness of other leaders across the school. This, alongside leaders' clear understanding of both the progress that has been made and the areas that they need to work on next, demonstrates the school's good capacity to sustain and continue its rapid improvement.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the remaining variability in teaching, in particular by ensuring that:
  - all lessons move at a suitably brisk pace so that everyone is fully challenged
  - all teachers make full use of the planned outcomes for different pupils when they teach their lessons to ensure that everyone makes as much progress as they can.
- Improve levels of pupil attendance so that they match those seen nationally.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are now making good progress and attaining at broadly average levels. The attainment of Year 6 pupils who took national Key Stage 2 tests in 2010 was low and these pupils did not make enough progress as they moved through the school. National test results improved dramatically in 2011; in particular, a much higher proportion of pupils reached expected levels in both English and mathematics. Although still slightly below national averages, early analysis of these results demonstrates that these pupils made good progress from their starting points at the end of Key Stage 1. Additionally, pupils currently in Year 6 are already attaining at considerably higher levels than Year 6 pupils were at this time last year. Year 2 national assessment levels have also increased significantly and a much higher proportion of pupils reached the higher levels last year.

Pupils in other year groups are also now making accelerated progress. This pattern of better progress is consistent across all groups in the school. Pupils learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress because of good quality, precisely targeted support. Pupils are now typically well motivated; they concentrate well in lessons and discuss together sensibly and enthusiastically. Evidence of good quality learning and progress was seen in most lessons during the inspection.

Pupils' behaviour has improved considerably and is now good. Any misbehaviour is managed skilfully by teachers and teaching assistants. Exclusions were common 18 months ago, but are now almost unknown. Pupils behave well around the site; incidents at lunchtime reduced significantly as a result of changes to lunchtime routines and useful additional training for midday supervisors. Attendance improved significantly last year, but was still relatively low. The attendance in the first three weeks of this term was, however, much higher than in the same period last year. Pupils make a full contribution to the life of the school and can point to a range of changes that they have been responsible for.

### *These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

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

<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved significantly in the past 18 months and is now good in the large majority of lessons. Teachers now have high expectations about what their pupils can achieve and lessons typically move at a brisk pace. They work closely together to plan their lessons; this has supported an improvement in planning, helping to ensure that everyone's lessons engage pupils' interest. Lesson plans reflect individual pupils' different abilities and current achievement much more closely, typically identifying different intended outcomes for particular pupils. However, in some cases teachers make too little use of this information and pupils do not necessarily achieve these different outcomes. A few lessons also move too slowly, with pupils given too long to complete activities. This reduces the level of challenge for some pupils and means that they make satisfactory rather than good progress.

The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. Setting of Years 4 to 6 by ability for mathematics lessons is helping teachers to challenge pupils of different ability. The integrated curriculum is interesting and engaging and it makes useful links across different subjects. Integrated curriculum lessons enable pupils to develop their subject knowledge and understanding, but also their general skills, such as their ability to work together and discuss in groups. Pupils benefit from a wide range of visits, clubs and exciting events. This enthuses and motivates them and helps to raise their aspirations and expectations of themselves.

Pupils are well supported. Those with particularly significant needs receive considerable help and support, as do their families. Staff work very closely with parents and with a range of agencies to ensure that any problems are resolved. Much good work is being done to improve attendance and the school is now working closely with its main partner secondary school to develop common approaches and procedures. The way in which pupils' behaviour is managed is particularly effective. All incidents of misbehaviour are logged and tracked, and the information is carefully analysed. It is used both to target additional support to individual pupils and to identify any general trends or patterns.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her deputy are providing high quality leadership. Staff have been challenged to achieve more, but also supported very effectively. A range of valuable work to improve teaching has resulted in significant improvement. Staff now have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. They are rightly proud of the school’s improvement but not complacent. Morale is high. It is notable that, following a number of years of high staff mobility, there have been few changes in staffing since the school was placed in special measures.

The work of middle leaders has developed well. Their roles are now much clearer and they have a much better understanding of the requirements of their role. They have benefitted from some very high quality training, enabling them to reflect critically on their work. Monitoring of the school’s work has inevitably been heavily led by the headteacher and deputy, but middle leaders are now much more closely involved in this process.

The governing body benefited from a range of support and training last year and is already effective. Its members have a thorough and detailed knowledge of the school’s strengths and weaknesses, and provide good challenge to leaders. They, too, are ambitious for further improvement.

The school’s improvement has been well supported by the local authority. Their reviews of the school’s effectiveness have acted as a useful supplement to HMI monitoring visits. A range of useful support has been provided and local authority officers have rigorously moderated the school’s judgements about pupils’ levels of attainment. There has also been very useful joint working with the headteacher’s other school. Links are in place at many levels – pupils, leaders, staff and governors; they have helped to enrich pupils’ curriculum experiences and have supported a number of developments across the school.

Staff are committed to ensuring that everyone does well. The way in which they collect and analyse data about pupil achievement has improved and they are now able to track the progress of different groups of pupils more closely. Achievement has risen sharply over the past year, but no group has been left behind. The number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, for example, has risen sharply; they are well supported and make at least as much progress as others. The school plays a strong role in promoting community cohesion. Leaders have a clear understanding of their community. Links have been strengthened and the school provides a range of valuable opportunities to families. Safeguarding procedures are robust and rigorously applied. The headteacher plays a strong role in this area and sets a high standard for everyone.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are motivated and enthusiastic learners. They join the school with skill levels below those typically seen for children of their age. They make rapid progress and close the gap considerably by the end of Reception.

Children are well taught. Lesson planning is very clear and adapted skilfully as the lesson develops. Work is devised so that it challenges and stretches children of different ability. There is a good balance between child-initiated learning and adult-led sessions. Relationships between staff and children are good, and this has a positive impact on behaviour. All adults have a good understanding of the needs of their group. The range of activities and resources is good. The outside area is well used, although more could be done to ensure that it promotes all aspects of children’s learning.

Developments are being well led. Staff work closely together as an effective team. They have a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Links with parents and carers are positive and productive. Learning records provide a useful record of individual children’s progress, although a lack of annotation by adults occasionally reduces their usefulness to parents. Good use of home visits helps staff to establish a reliable baseline when children join the school.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

Inspectors met with parents and carers during this inspection and two of the monitoring inspections. They also looked at the results of a recent parental questionnaire sent out by the school.

Parents and carers recognise and value the school's dramatic improvement. They appreciate the fact that, after a number of years of high mobility, staffing is now very settled. Many parents and carers who did not originally choose the school are now very positive about it and are vocal in its defence.

## **Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire**

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

## 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



29 September 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of The Willows Primary School, Newbury RG14 7SJ**

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings.

As you know, I have been visiting the school every term to check on its progress. I have enjoyed my visits to The Willows and have been really impressed by how much it has improved. This time I decided that the school has improved so much that I do not need to visit any more. In fact, The Willows is now a good school.

You are now making much more progress with your work. This is because teaching is much better. You are also getting some very useful help if you fall behind. Some of the lessons are not quite so good so we have asked staff to work hard to make all lessons like the best.

You are very well cared for. Staff work very hard to sort out any problems. Behaviour is much better and the school is a lovely place to be. Your attendance has improved a lot, but it is still quite low. We have asked the school to continue working hard on this area. You really benefit from some excellent trips, clubs and visits.

Miss Butler and her staff have achieved a great deal in the past 18 months. They are pleased about that, but also keen to make the school even better in the future. They know just what to do to achieve this.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Russell  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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