

Willow Bank Junior School

Duffield Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG5 4RW

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Despite uncertainties in leadership and management, achievement has improved since the previous inspection and is good in all year groups. All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those that have special educational needs, make good progress and standards are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science.
- Teaching is led well and of good quality. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the good range of interesting activities that teachers generally provide. Even so, a few lessons require improvement. This is because teachers sometimes waste time at the beginning of lessons and the pace of learning is slowed because introductions are sometimes too long.
- Relationships across the school are positive and behaviour is good. Pupils are happy and feel safe. By the time they reach Year 6, they are confident and secure and have high self-esteem.
- The school is led expertly by two outstanding headteachers. Governors and staff are united in their determination to drive improvement and make the school even better. Effective initiatives, based on accurate school self-evaluation, have had a positive impact on teaching and learning. Child protection, health and safety and staff vetting procedures are of good quality and meet regulatory requirements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although some lessons are outstanding, there is not yet enough excellent teaching to make achievement outstanding. All groups make good progress and this leads to standards that are significantly above average rather than high.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice.
- Inspectors observed 18 lessons led by 11 teachers. Of these, four were joint observations undertaken with the two interim headteachers.
- Inspectors held meetings with a representative from the local authority, three meetings with members of the governing body, and with groups of pupils. In addition to a number of meetings with members of staff, the questionnaires completed by 19 members of staff were taken into account.
- As well as informal discussions with parents and carers at the start of the school day, a meeting was held with them. In addition, account was taken of the 38 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation including the school’s analysis of pupils’ progress, teachers’ lesson plans, the school’s action plan, local authority reports, leaders’ monitoring records and pupils’ work as well as those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Keith Sadler, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Linda Rafferty	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is of average size. Most pupils live close to the school, although a few are from the surrounding area.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and both the percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are well below the national average.
- Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and this is very low in comparison to the national average. These pupils are entitled to the pupil premium (additional government funding).
- The number of pupils supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is much below the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards set by the government, which determine the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school's leadership and management have gone through a turbulent period in the past year. Currently there is an acting deputy headteacher.
- Since January 2012, the school has been under the interim headship of two acting headteachers. One is an experienced headteacher who is a senior officer of Wokingham Borough Council. He is currently in the school for three days each week. The other two days are led by the second headteacher.
- The governors are currently in the process of recruiting a new permanent headteacher. The two acting headteachers will remain at the school until the new headteacher takes up post.
- The school has started a breakfast club this term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By April 2014, lift the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently outstanding by ensuring that:
 - pupils are clear about what they need to do to reach the next step in their learning
 - the learning of lower-ability pupils in mathematics is supported by a good range of practical mathematics resources
 - the pace of learning is brisk, by reducing time wasted at the beginning of lessons and by the length of teachers' introductory comments
 - inconsistencies in the setting and reviewing of homework are removed
 - teachers' lesson plans include more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is good**

- Pupils enter the school with above average attainment. School tracking data, work in books and in lessons show that all groups achieve well. When taking account of their different starting points, the proportion making or exceeding the expected progress is above national figures.
- Attainment has improved well since the average levels found at the last inspection. At the end of Year 6, standards are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science.
- The strong emphasis that has been placed on strengthening achievement in writing, particularly for the more-able pupils, has paid dividends. In consequence, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels at the end of Year 6 has been substantially increased.
- In reading, a re-vamped programme has had a positive impact. This, when allied to the increased emphasis on the teaching of sounds and letters for the less-able pupils, means that attainment is now high at the end of Year 6. The new reading books are popular and pupils' progress is closely monitored.
- In mathematics, although achievement is good overall, less-able pupils' progress is often restricted because there are too few mathematical resources available. However, this is not always the case. For example, in a good-quality lower-set Year 5 lesson, the teacher was adroit in making use of practical apparatus to help pupils to grasp the concept of place value to four digits.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute strongly to their good achievement. The pupils settle to their tasks quickly and with enthusiasm because they find lessons interesting. They are articulate and keen to share their ideas.
- The few pupils that are in receipt of additional funding through the pupil premium achieve well in English and mathematics. Their progress is tracked well and there are good procedures to ensure that they do not slip behind.
- The progress and achievement of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are good. Their learning has been accelerated because recent effective systems have been put into place to ensure that needs are now identified much earlier. In addition, there are good-quality programmes and plans for different individuals.
- Boys and girls, pupils from different ethnic groups and those entitled to free school meals all make similarly good progress to their classmates.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- Teaching is typically good across a wide range of subjects. Learning is made interesting and work is clearly explained. Teachers manage the pupils exceptionally well and the ensuing positive relationships ensure that all classrooms have a calm and purposeful atmosphere. As a Year 6 pupil commented, 'Our teachers understand us and are patient. They care for us as individuals and they want us to improve.'
- Teachers generally make good use of assessments to plan work that is matched well to pupils' learning needs. Their assessments are aided by good-quality questioning skills to check pupils' understanding. Marking is thorough and comprehensive. Despite these strengths, pupils are not clear about what they need to do to reach the next level in their learning in both writing and mathematics.
- Learning mostly proceeds at a good pace and interesting tasks add to pupils' enjoyment and progress. Teachers are particularly adept at building pupils' social skills by setting activities for pupils to work in pairs and small groups. In a good Year 4 science lesson, for example, pupils were working in pairs to produce their own ideas of the concept of forces and this was very productive.
- Even though the pace of learning is generally good, where lessons require improvement or even in a few good lessons, teachers spend too long on introductions. This lowers pupils'

motivation.

- The teaching of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is good. Their learning is promoted well by the good support that they are given in class by the skilled teaching assistants. Their teaching is similarly effective when they are withdrawn for small group or individual teaching.
- A minority of parents or carers raised concerns about the appropriateness of homework provided. This issue was reviewed. These views are well founded because there are some inconsistencies in the quality and range of homework set.
- Teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection and most lessons are now good, and an increasing proportion is outstanding. However, overall, teaching is not yet outstanding. Although teaching promotes effective learning, the proportion that is outstanding is not sufficiently high to promote securely outstanding achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school and during break times it is often outstanding. Pupils know what they do affects others and are helpful and kind to each other and to adults. Their well-developed social skills are the result of all the adults supporting and caring for them well. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated by them, and this too helps pupils to feel that they are well cared for. As a Year 6 pupil said, 'Everyone is friendly, well behaved and safe in our school.'
- Although the very large majority of parents and carers who completed the Parent View questionnaire said that the school makes sure that the pupils are well behaved, only half said that the school deals effectively with bullying. These views are not confirmed by inspection findings. Incidents of bullying of any kind, such as aggressive behaviour and name calling, are very rare. School records indicate that behaviour is typically good.
- Pupils enjoy learning and want to do well. They work with enthusiasm on their tasks, listen carefully to their teachers and treat the contributions made by their classmates with respect. The good personal and social development curriculum includes an effective programme to help pupils to develop a secure understanding of how to behave safely and sensibly out of school. They are also taught how to use the internet safely.
- The vast majority of parents and carers say that their children feel safe in school. Most parents and carers also state that they are well looked after. Pupils too say that they feel safe. These views are confirmed by inspection findings which show that the pupils are rightly confident that any fears they have would be resolved by staff.
- A serious incident that occurred at the school since the previous education inspection has been investigated by the appropriate authorities and is now closed. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind. The welfare provision in the school was evaluated against the regulations that are in place and inspection judgements are based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection.

The leadership and management are good

- Although the school's senior leadership has experienced some turbulence, the school has continued to improve its provision and pupils' achievement. Teaching and learning are closely monitored by senior leaders, and teachers' priorities for improvement are quickly supported by additional training. This is because there are now robust and well-conceived arrangements for the appraisal of teaching.
- Revised tracking procedures introduced by the interim headteachers have strengthened the depth and quality of data used to check pupils' progress. These data are used well to identify any groups or individuals who are in danger of falling behind. Self-evaluation procedures are also thorough and accurate, never complacent and well directed towards improvement. These features have been key to the school's improved effectiveness.
- Teachers with subject responsibilities, particularly those for literacy, numeracy and for the

leadership and management of pupils that have disabilities and those with special educational needs, are effective. They have all developed robust systems for checking provision and progress in their respective areas. In addition, specific improvement projects, such as that to raise the proportion of pupils gaining higher levels in writing, have paid dividends. Also, the new reading scheme has had a positive impact both in terms of improved achievement and pupils' enjoyment of reading. These improvements provide a clear demonstration of the school's commitment to ensuring that all groups of pupils have equal opportunity to succeed.

- The school has benefited from extensive and successful support from the local authority. This has included specialist personnel advice and support for the governing body. Critically, the local authority has also brokered the appointment of an outstanding interim headteacher as well as seconding one of its own senior staff on a part-time basis. These two headteachers jointly provide excellent leadership and their commitment, drive and sensitivity have been fundamental to the school's effectiveness.
- Close attention is paid to additional funding being spent effectively with entitled pupils benefiting from good support.
- The curriculum is of good quality. Revisions to the literacy curriculum and the close tailoring of topics and themes to pupils' interests mean that pupils' enjoyment has been enhanced. The programme for personal development is good and the curriculum successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum for the arts, particularly music, and that for physical education is good. Nonetheless, senior staff are keenly aware that teachers' plans do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to make use of ICT across a range of subjects and themes.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is effective. With support from the local authority, the governing body has not shirked its responsibilities. The governing body has taken decisive action and members have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that the children's best interests lay at the heart of their work
 - members of the governing body, with support from the interim headteachers, have reviewed policies and procedures to ensure that all regulatory requirements, including safeguarding, are met. Those for child protection, health and safety and staff vetting procedures are fully in place and of good quality.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	109890
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	405260

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Davies
Headteacher	Jim Mathieson
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 November 2010
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