

# The Willows Primary School

Church Road, Basildon, SS14 2EX

**Inspection dates** 13–14 November 2012

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Inadequate                  | 4        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Good                        | 2        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Boys do not do as well as girls. Boys are making better progress than in the past but they are not catching up as quickly as they need to.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have fallen behind in the past and have a lot of ground to make up to do as well as they should in Key Stage 2 tests.
- There are gaps in some teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics and the teaching of reading and spelling.
- Some pupils feel that pupils with challenging behaviour get treated more favourably than others.
- The management of a small number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties is not always good. Sometimes these pupils remain in class even when their behaviour becomes distracting to other pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leadership is strong. The headteacher has built a team who know what they are doing.
- Leaders have a very good picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The school has a group of teachers who are excellent role models. These teachers successfully coach other teachers to improve their skills. This is proving very successful.
- The school is rapidly improving. Teaching is much better than it was in the past.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and around school.
- Pupils are well cared for and feel safe in school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that their teachers make learning fun.
- Children get a good start to school in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils are catching up to where they should be. Younger pupils are nearer to where they should be in English and mathematics. Gaps between boys and girls are smaller than they used to be.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons. Four of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised its tracking data, governors' minutes and documentation relating to behaviour, monitoring, management and safeguarding.
- Inspectors talked to two groups of pupils formally and spoke to several groups of pupils around the school.
- Inspectors took account of 35 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and talked to groups of parents and carers at the end of the school day.
- The lead inspector took account of the findings of the three previous monitoring visits.

## Inspection team

Michael Sheridan, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Cousins

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*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.*

### Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average sized primary school.
- There are more girls than boys.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for additional government funding known as pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- This school was judged to require special measures in 2011. Inspectors have visited the school four times since that inspection.
- The school did not meet the government-set minimum floor standards in 2011. Achievement in 2012 improved and would have met them. 2012 floor standards have not yet been set.

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

- Improve teaching that still requires improvement to be good by:
  - continuing to monitor teaching regularly and use performance management to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers
  - continuing to use and develop the successful coaching techniques that have led to the improvements seen so far
  - increasing teachers' knowledge of the way children learn to read and spell
  - increasing teachers' understanding of how children learn about numbers and how to provide additional challenge to more able pupils in mathematics lessons.
- Ensure underperforming groups of pupils catch up in English and mathematics by ensuring no opportunity is missed to boost learning for these pupils.
- Improve the strategies used to support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties by:
  - making sure they are seen as fair and equitable by pupils, parents and carers
  - making sure that behaviour has minimal impact on the learning of others
  - working with experts within the local authority, in local special schools and pupil referral units to provide additional, focused support to ensure these pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

## Inspection judgements

### **The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- Pupils are doing better in English and mathematics than they have in the past. They are making better progress as a result of better teaching. Progress in English is good. Progress in mathematics is increasing but still requires improvement because some teachers do not teach this subject as effectively.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are catching up in their learning. These pupils have not made sufficient progress in the past, particularly boys and those who are entitled to free school meals. Good and outstanding teaching in Years 5 and 6 means that the gaps between different groups are beginning to close.
- Boys in Years 5 and 6 are a long way behind where they should be in English and mathematics. It is unlikely that these boys will catch up with the girls before they leave this school and, as a result, they will be less well-prepared for secondary school.
- The gaps between boys' and girls' attainment is much smaller lower down the school. This is because teaching is better than it was in the past. This means that the gaps currently seen in Years 5 and 6 are likely to be much smaller in the future.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve in line with their peers. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language are given appropriate support so they can join in lessons fully.
- The pupil premium is being used sensibly and monitored carefully. This extra money provides support for underachieving groups of pupils, increasing the number of adults in classes and supporting families and pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. It is being targeted well and is helping pupils catch up.
- Pupils enjoy reading and have lots of opportunities to read for pleasure. Pupils get a good start in learning to read in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Adults skilfully teach pupils how to blend sounds together to make words.
- Some pupils make slower progress in learning to read and spell in Years 1 and 2. This is because some adults here do not have the necessary skills to teach effectively the sounds that letters make.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making better progress than in the past. This improvement is not sufficient for these pupils to make good progress and this requires improvement.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Many lessons are good or better, leading to pupils making better progress. Pupils enjoy their lessons and usually take part in activities with enthusiasm.
- Teaching is strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children get a good start to their education in Nursery and Reception. They enjoy their time in these classes and learn at a rapid

pace.

- The quality of teaching is more mixed in Years 1 to 4. Teaching has improved in these year groups with more teaching that is good. Inadequate teaching is rare. Too many lessons require improvement because teachers have gaps in their understanding about the best methods for teaching number and the sounds that letters make (phonics).
- Phonics teaching is patchy. Some is very good and, in these lessons, pupils take part in activities that make them better readers and spellers. Some teachers struggle to find appropriate tasks to help pupils learn these crucial skills. This leads to pupils being given work that is too easy, too hard or not exciting enough to keep them engaged.
- Some teachers do not teach mathematics effectively enough. This is because they have gaps in their own subject knowledge and do not always know the best way to help pupils think mathematically. Some pupils are not sufficiently challenged because teachers are sometimes slow to move them to more demanding work.
- Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is strong and is helping pupils who have fallen behind to catch up. Work in pupils' books shows that boys and girls are making rapid progress, although some boys enter this part of the school having already fallen a long way behind.
- Most marking gives pupils helpful advice about how to improve their work. Teachers expect pupils to respond to their feedback and this means that improvements are made immediately. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 talk very positively about how their teacher's feedback helps them improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are providing increasingly effective support. Many teaching assistants have learnt new skills and use these well in lessons to support individuals and groups.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Behaviour in most lessons is positive. Pupils are eager to learn and take part in activities and discussions with enthusiasm.
- Attendance is broadly average. Pupils enjoy being at school. They are happy and feel safe and well cared for.
- Pupils say that bullying is usually dealt with by their teachers, although they say that this has not always been the case. Pupils, parents and carers say that behaviour has improved.
- Behaviour on the playground is positive. Pupils play well together and enjoy the wide open spaces available to them.
- Pupils and adults in school get on well together. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils generally work hard to meet these expectations.
- In a small number of lessons some pupils do not settle as well as they should. This tends to be in lessons where activities are not as engaging as they should be and, as a result, pupils become restless.
- A small number of pupils have disabilities or special educational needs that have an impact on

their behaviour. The school goes a long way to make sure these pupils are included in school life. However, there are times when other pupils see their treatment as lenient and unfair. There are occasions when teachers and teaching assistants do not act quickly enough to avoid attention-seeking behaviour disturbing the learning of others.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- Leaders have been very successful in turning this school around. The remaining issues highlighted in this report are small compared to the challenges that they have successfully tackled.
- The headteacher is well respected by parents, carers, pupils and staff. He makes himself very available so they know that anyone can approach him about any matter. He has been successful in rebuilding the reputation of the school in the local community.
- Leaders at all levels are in a strong position to continue to improve this school. They form a strong team with complementary skills. Leaders work well together to identify issues and plan effectively to tackle them.
- The school's leaders are excellent coaches. This is why teaching is no longer inadequate. Leaders identify the reasons why some teachers are not being as successful as they should be and provide expert guidance to help them to improve their skills.
- Performance management is used very effectively to link pay to effectiveness. Teachers know what is expected of them and know that they are held accountable for the success of pupils in their charge. Leaders regularly monitor the effectiveness of teaching and provide bespoke training to overcome weaknesses. Teachers are in no doubt about the responsibility they have to meet these high expectations and strive to do so willingly, because they feel supported.
- Self-evaluation is accurate so that leaders know what needs to happen next. The issues identified in this report are already being tackled.
- The local authority has provided effective support while the school has been in special measures. They have remained focused on supporting leaders in improving teaching and increasing their own capacity to sustain their own improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body asks pertinent questions of leaders to challenge their thinking and make sure school improvement is focused on the right things. Governors monitor the work of the school and work alongside subject leaders, asking questions and challenging their thinking. They know about the quality of teaching and arrangements for performance management. Governors receive information about the pupil premium and understand how it is spent and the difference it is making. They are in a strong position to support the school towards becoming a good school.

## 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

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 132084 |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Essex  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 393580 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| <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> | 471                       |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body        |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Martin Pretlove           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | David Bridge              |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 29 March 2011             |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01268 470880              |
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