

# The Willows Primary School

Downing Close, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP2 9ER

**Inspection dates** 29–30 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Highly ambitious senior leaders, staff and governors have brought about a substantial rise in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- The majority of teaching is good and it is sometimes outstanding, especially in mathematics.
- National test results in Year 2 have risen sharply since 2010 and are similar to those found in most schools.
- Achievement for the small number of pupils in Year 6 has improved over the past two years, especially in reading and mathematics. Those in the current Year 6 are already working at or above the levels expected for their age.
- Through training, staff have become exceptionally skilled in managing the few pupils with challenging behaviour. Consequently, there is a calm atmosphere in which pupils learn.
- Pupils behave well. Lunchtimes and playtimes are happy occasions where older pupils take care of the younger ones.
- Pupils say they feel safe and most come to school regularly.
- Teachers and senior leaders check pupils' progress frequently. The number of pupils making good progress is higher than in most schools.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers make the most effective use of teaching assistants and practical resources to support pupils' learning.
- Teachers take time to mark pupils' work, but do not always explain the next step needed to make better progress. Time is not usually set aside for pupils to correct their mistakes or to respond to their teacher's comments.
- Pupils do not do as well in writing as in other subjects. They do not have enough chance to develop their understanding of how to write well or build the language they need.
- Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement. Redevelopment is restricting access to the outside and children do not have enough chance to find things out for themselves.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, sometimes accompanied by the headteacher. They also made visits to short sessions where pupils were engaged in discussions, and reading and handwriting activities.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lunchtime in and around the school.
- Pupils met with inspectors to tell them their experiences of the school and to read to them. The previous work of pupils across the school was scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, the headteacher and staff with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs, the Early Years Foundation Stage, literacy and numeracy. The views of the local authority were shared during a telephone call.
- The responses from 11 parents who completed the questionnaire on the Parent View website were considered. Inspectors also spoke to parents when they brought their children to school.
- A number of documents were considered. These included reports from the local authority and other professionals about the school's effectiveness, the school's self-evaluation and development plans, information on pupils' current progress, minutes from governing body meetings, arrangements for safeguarding and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Kath Beck, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Watson

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is smaller than other primary schools nationally. The number of pupils on roll in the younger age groups is increasing because the number the school can admit rose in September 2012 from 30 to 45.
- The percentage of pupils starting and leaving the school at other than the usual time is higher than in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those with a parent in the armed forces, is much higher than in most schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is low in comparison to all schools. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high, more than double that found in all schools nationally.
- The school's most recent Year 6 results cannot be compared with current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. This is because there were not enough pupils to make such comparisons meaningful.
- Two members of staff are on extended leave.
- Almost all pupils are educated on site. The school uses alternative provision, First Base, to support a very small number of pupils with specific behavioural needs.
- The headteacher supports other schools to improve their quality of leadership and management.
- The Willows Children's Centre and The Willows Daycare are on the same site, but inspected separately. Their reports are on the Ofsted website.
- The Nursery and Reception area is currently part of a redevelopment programme.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching so that more of it is outstanding by making sure that all staff:
  - use teaching assistants to support pupils' learning throughout lessons
  - give pupils practical resources to make learning more purposeful
  - give pupils a clear indication in marking of the next step they need to take to improve their work, and make time for them to correct errors and respond to their teachers' comments.
- Raise achievement in writing by:
  - setting more activities that help pupils to build up their knowledge of language
  - making sure that all adults model a good style of writing and handwriting. This is to help pupils to understand and use their skills in grammar, spelling and punctuation more effectively.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, put into practice all current plans to redevelop the classrooms and outside play areas, and make sure that children have enough time to find things out for themselves.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The number of pupils in Year 6 has been small for several years. It is not possible to make an accurate comparison of the school's results with all schools nationally. Results are affected by pupils who join the school at different times, and by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. That said, most pupils in Year 6 in 2012, from their varied and sometimes low starting points, reached at least average standards in reading and mathematics.
- In 2013 more pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach the levels that are expected or higher than expected for their age. This is a much improved picture than in previous years and is the result of the improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Progress for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement. They do well in mathematics, understanding of the world and expressive arts and design. However, their progress is slower in literacy, communication and language, personal social and emotional development, and physical development. This is because too much of their learning is led by adults and they do not have enough time to find things out for themselves. They enter Year 1 with knowledge and skills in these areas that are lower than those that are typical for children aged five.
- Pupils' progress is patchy in Year 1, but accelerates rapidly in Year 2 and is consistently good or outstanding in the rest of the school. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 is similar to and in some cases above that in most schools in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. Throughout the school they learn the sounds letters make and how they blend together to help them to read. They have plenty of opportunity to extend their reading skills, including in mathematics. The younger pupils read frequently to adults, helping them to develop their skills quickly.
- Standards in writing are not as good as in other subjects because pupils do not always have the wide range of language they need to write as creatively as they would like. Not all staff show pupils how to write with a good style of handwriting or how to construct sentences using the correct grammar, punctuation and spelling to explain their ideas clearly.
- Steps to improve pupils' progress in mathematics have been very successful. Pupils have a good grasp of mathematical words, gain skills in calculation quickly and are confident in using a range of methods to solve problems.
- In order that pupils have an equal chance to succeed, the school tracks their progress carefully. Senior leaders and staff identify quickly the pupils who are not learning as well as they should and make appropriate arrangements to help them. The actions taken to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are successful in helping them to make good progress.
- The progress of pupils aided by the pupil premium, and who are known to be eligible for free school meals is good. As a result of assistance in the nurture group, other small groups and in-class support, these pupils do better than those in similar groups nationally. There are no gaps between the attainment of these pupils and their peers in mathematics. The gap in English is closing year-on-year.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching is mostly good, but in Years 5 and 6 it is outstanding, especially in mathematics. In the very best lessons, teachers build precisely on what pupils have learned before. They teach new ideas clearly and help pupils to apply them to mathematical situations immediately. After a review, more demanding work is offered. This is helping to fill gaps in pupils' learning, and achieve as well as they can.
- Most teachers expect the best from pupils. They have good subject knowledge, know their pupils well and plan work that has the right level of challenge for them. In their introductions to lessons teachers make clear what pupils are to learn and what they have to do to be successful.
- In addition, good lessons are characterised by:
  - the range of questions teachers ask to help pupils develop their understanding
  - opportunities for pupils to talk to one another and share their ideas, for example about the best method to solve a mathematical problem
  - good time management, so that pupils have time to absorb new learning and record it in their books
  - teachers making the most of short sessions to review how well pupils are doing and to reshape their work if it is too hard or too easy
  - good quality feedback to individual pupils while they are working to correct misunderstandings and praise their achievements.
- Teachers are highly skilled in managing pupils' behaviour and offer many interesting activities to capture their interest. Pupils value the ways 'teachers help us to think'.
- Pupils enjoy completing the tasks they are set. However, in some cases they do not always have sufficient practical mathematical resources or access to the words they may need to write, to make learning more purposeful. In the youngest classes children are sometimes asked to complete worksheets that limit the chance for them to express their ideas in their own way.
- Staff assess pupils' progress frequently. Pupils are involved in discussions with their teacher to agree the targets they are to work on to reach higher levels of attainment. Work is marked regularly and pupils are clear about their successes. They do not always receive enough information about the way to improve the next piece of work, or have time to talk through and correct their mistakes.
- Each class has a teaching assistant who helps different groups of pupils with their work during activities. They are not always used well enough at the start and end of lessons to support pupils, especially disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, with their learning.

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

- Pupils say, 'Behaviour is much better than a few years ago as teachers are stricter about it.' Staff and governors report notable improvements in pupils' behaviour over the previous two years. Pupils know they are expected to be courteous and well-mannered at all times and respond well.
- The school's work with First Base that specialises in behaviour management, the nurture group

and its high quality relationships between staff and pupils, are helping the very few pupils who find it hard to behave well to take responsibility for their actions. This has resulted in a marked improvement in the behaviour of these individuals. The number of times that pupils have not been allowed to go to school for a short period because of poor behaviour has reduced significantly since September 2012.

- Lunchtimes and breaks from lessons are important social occasions. These are well supervised. Staff often play games with the pupils, in order to help them to improve their social skills.
- Lesson observations and school records show that low level disruption in lessons is rare. When asked, pupils said they are proud of their school, and know that it is important 'to listen and to learn'. During the inspection pupils maintained their concentration, responded well to teachers' questions and listened patiently to one another.
- Pupils feel safe, know about different kinds of bullying and talk to their teachers if they are worried. They know that the school does not tolerate any form of discrimination.
- Senior leaders make sure that pupils whose circumstances are thought to make them vulnerable are cared for well. Counselling and additional support help pupils to grow in confidence.
- The school promotes good attendance robustly. It rightly takes strong action against families whose children do not come to school often enough. Attendance has improved from a low level and is now similar to that found in most schools.

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

- Strong leadership by the headteacher initially drove improvements, especially in raising the ambitions of staff and pupils about what can be achieved. There is now a strong, well-trained senior leadership team and governing body. They work in unison, sharing the commitment to raise pupils' aspirations for their future and to make a real difference to their lives.
- The long-term plan for the development of the school details what needs to be done to see that the building can accommodate the increasing number of pupils, and to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' learning to outstanding.
- Senior leaders are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They use information about pupils' progress, checks on the quality of teaching, and reviews of pupils' work to identify key areas that need to be improved.
- School improvements are driven by detailed plans that make clear what is to be done to raise achievement. The impact of this, the staff training programme, and the work of teachers who have responsibilities for leading literacy, numeracy, and special educational needs, is seen clearly in the rise in the rate of pupils' progress.
- Detailed plans to improve children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage are at an early stage of development. Construction work has commenced to improve the building and play areas. Staff are visiting outstanding schools to research how to make the most of the new learning environment. The school has identified that children need to make better progress through finding out things for themselves, rather than relying on adults.

- Senior leaders use their observations of lessons and their scrutiny of pupils' work to set targets for teachers to improve their performance. These targets are followed up and it is expected that teachers will make required changes quickly.
- Subjects and topics give pupils a clear understanding of the wider world. They offer them the chance to make decisions and to learn about the things they are interested in. Discussions about philosophical issues such as 'freedom', participation in major musical events at national venues, and residential visits add much to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school has received good support from the local authority while it has undertaken major steps to raise achievement. The headteacher shares her leadership skills to improve pupils' learning experiences in other schools.
- Staff are taking determined action to foster a stronger partnership with parents. Many parents attend evenings to hear about their child's progress or watch them perform in musical events and plays.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Members of the governing body have undertaken training to strengthen their skills and hold the school to account. They review the school's progress information and have a good understanding of how well it is doing compared with other schools. The governors know the school's strengths and its priorities for development. They direct funds to support these priorities. Governors supplement the amount of money available for pupils eligible for pupil premium. It is spent wisely on providing good support for these pupils in their learning, as well as giving them the chance to visit places further afield. The budget is monitored closely and the progress of all pupils is checked to see that developments, and support from additional funds, are raising achievement. The governors know about the quality of teaching, how any underperformance is tackled and are fully involved in the school's procedures for pay review. They have good long-term plans for the future of the school, taking into account the potential impact of the rising roll.

## 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>	124699
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	402284

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

<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>	194
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mark Fotheringham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vanessa Kingsley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 June 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01473 683178
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