

The Willows School

Locksley Drive, Thurcroft, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S66 9NT

Inspection dates 12–13 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress over their time in school and achieve well. They learn a wide range of knowledge and skills, literacy and numeracy in particular, but also those related to work and independence. This prepares them well for leaving school and furthering their education and training for employment.
- Expert teaching throughout the school ensures that whatever pupils' needs are they learn effectively and make progress. Expectations for what pupils can achieve are high.
- In nearly all lessons assessment is thorough and teachers know pupils well, planning lessons effectively so that pupils learn in a clear step by step way.
- Teachers, classroom assistants and pupil support staff work together in a close-knit team, effectively ensuring pupils are safe and supported in terms of improving their behaviour, overcoming barriers to learning and developing independence.
- As a result, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy school, treat each other with respect and work hard.
- Good leadership and management are driving improvement well. This has created a school with a wide range of good provision meeting the academic and personal needs of every pupil, enabling them to achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The planning of lessons requires improvement because it does not always ensure that work is well matched to pupils' abilities. That teaching assistants are used well to support learning or that pupils have enough time to work practically and independently.
- Arrangements for checking the rates of progress that pupils are making are not rigorous enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons which involved nine of the school's 10 teachers. The headteacher joined inspectors in observing two lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- They scrutinised a wide range of documents held by the school including its self-evaluation, policies, procedures for safeguarding pupils and data on pupils' progress.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for inspectors to be able to access them.

Inspection team

Alan Lemon, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Pupils have moderate learning difficulties and all have a statement of special educational needs. A significant proportion of pupils also have autism spectrum conditions and/or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- There has been significant change in staffing since the school's last inspection. At senior level, a new deputy headteacher took up post in April 2010 and two teachers were promoted into new posts as assistant headteachers in January 2011. Several long-standing teachers retired and half of the school's teachers are newly appointed.
- The school is designated a specialist school in the area of cognition and learning.
- Occasionally, the school uses alternative providers to help meet the needs of a very small number of pupils. Currently, two pupils attend a GCSE art lesson at Dinnington Comprehensive School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teaching is planned thoroughly so that:
 - the work set for pupils is well matched to their different abilities, takes into account what they have already learnt and what they need to learn next
 - introductions to lessons are not too long and that pupils are allowed to get on with practical tasks or independent work as quickly as possible
 - teaching assistants spend most of the time actively supporting pupils' learning.
- Refine the methods of gathering and analysing data about pupils' progress so that leaders and teachers have an accurate view of the rates of progress made by all pupils during their time in school and whether these are fast enough.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- By the end of Year 11, pupils are well prepared for and go on to further education, training and employment. By that stage they have developed their knowledge and understanding and have learnt a wide range of essential skills making them well qualified and sufficiently independent to tackle future challenges and continue their learning.
- Pupils make good progress overall in their work and activities. They have frequent opportunities to practise skills they have learnt and apply them in many different situations. Most pupils make the progress expected of them and a considerable proportion do better than this. However, achievement is not outstanding because the proportion of pupils doing better than expected is not high.
- Much of pupils' work is sharply focused on the types of problems and challenges they will encounter daily. Telling the time, reading timetables and calculating time differences is grasped extremely well by pupils. In Years 3 and 4, pupils learn to count accurately and, over time, to confidently add and subtract sums including money.
- Most pupils read at least to the extent of understanding information and instructions. For example, in a food technology lesson, Year 7 pupils read recipes, followed instructions and weighed ingredients. Across the school pupils write legibly, spell words accurately and use correct punctuation.
- Every pupil is offered the same opportunities to learn and progress. The high level of expertise in meeting pupils' special educational needs, particularly in dealing with autism spectrum conditions and behaviour creates the conditions within which pupils can achieve well. The extra money given to the school through the pupil premium is spent effectively on additional staff and activities supporting individual pupils and small groups to the extent that the significant number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieve as well as all other pupils.
- In Years 10 and 11, a broad choice of academic and work-related qualifications provides the incentives and challenges for each pupil to progress well whatever their different abilities. The most able pupils work hard to pass GCSE examinations in English, mathematics and other subjects. Good reading skills enable these pupils to understand the nature of characters in stories and explain these in well written accounts. In mathematics, they solve problems confidently using the rules of algebra. They also have a good understanding of, and skills in using, information and communication technology such as designing and publishing posters and using electronic mail.
- Accessing some specialist teaching through the use of alternative providers helps pupils develop their skills in particular areas, such as is currently the case in art.
- Pupils' learning and progress benefits considerably from the wide choice of work-related activities such as cookery, joinery, hair and beauty and bricklaying. Their practical nature and immediate relevance to pupils' own experiences means pupils value them, work hard and so they make good progress in their knowledge and skills. This is especially attractive to pupils who have difficulty with behaving well and are reluctant to learn. These experiences are also of considerable help to pupils in deciding future courses in training and further education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Across the school, teachers, classroom assistants and the wider group of support staff make up a strong team who ensure pupils' needs are met effectively and that they are able to learn well and make good progress. Staff know each pupil very well and their effective management of behaviour and good relationships leads to lessons which are calm and usually focused well learning.
- All staff are committed to supporting pupils through regular assessment, and most use this well to plan their lessons. In these instances, teachers ensure that pupils have time to gain a secure

grasp of new knowledge and skills. There are also many opportunities given to practising and revising what they have learnt.

- Lessons are usually lively, interesting and enjoyable and this encourages pupils to contribute and be serious about their learning. The high expectations and good pace seen in most lessons reflects the positive impact of work undertaken by leaders and teachers to improve teaching.
- Some teachers do this especially well and so it leads to outstanding teaching and learning. In these instances, teachers plan lessons very carefully and set work at various levels of difficulty to match pupils' different abilities. It is made very clear to pupils what they are to learn and how this builds on what they have already achieved so they know the purpose of their work. These lessons have a strong element of practical work which pupils are allowed to get on with independently.
- Pupils are not well suited to the lengthy introductions or excessive teacher talk which happens in a few lessons. In these cases teaching assistants are underused. Otherwise they make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning in lessons. Occasionally, teacher's planning is not rigorous enough in setting work well matched to pupils' different abilities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils enjoy school tremendously and feel very safe. Attendance is average and improving rapidly. Pupils arrive each day on time looking forward to enjoyable experiences and friendships. The outstanding support for pupils in school and beyond promotes their well-being exceptionally well. They rapidly develop self-confidence and discover talents and personal strengths that raise their self-esteem. Independence grows with their increasing capacity to manage everyday demands and in their mastering of new skills.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development, safety and healthy lifestyles are embedded deeply in the school's aims and ethos and this contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The very effective management of pupils who find it difficult to behave well and are reluctant to learn ensures they make fast progress in settling and in meeting the school's expectations of them. Behaviour improves significantly over time, as do pupils' attitudes to learning which, overall, are outstanding.
- Pupils do not suffer from bullying or harassment. They are very closely supervised and staff teach pupils to have strong regard for others which means they treat each other well and with respect. Pupils know about the different forms of bullying and risks to their safety. They have many opportunities to learn about these in lessons and beyond school such as when learning to use public transport or going on educational visits.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteachers' vision, ambition and expertise ensure the school is well led and that it is improving well. The money from the pupil premium is spent smartly on a good range of extra resources which has improved outcomes for the pupils known to be eligible for this extra support.
- Leadership tasks are spread widely among staff and are performed effectively with drive and commitment. Cohesive team work and a common sense of purpose have a positive impact on the range and quality of the work and activities planned for pupils.
- In the curriculum, a very good balance has been achieved between academic, work-related, personal, social and emotional areas of learning which comprehensively meet pupils' needs. The breadth and relevance of pupils' work and activities to all of their needs, ensures the school's promotion of their spiritual moral, social and cultural development is exceptional.
- Leaders also ensure that procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust. Good links are made with parents and a wide range of support is available to them to help them with their children at home.
- While a large amount of data is collected to enable leaders to track pupils' progress, the analysis

of it does not provide a clear and accurate picture of the different rates of progress that pupils make. For example, it does not distinguish sharply enough between the proportions making better than expected, as opposed to expected progress. This reduces the rigour of plans to improve achievement.

- The headteacher and the school are highly regarded by the local authority, which provides light touch support as a result. The headteacher, teachers and support staff provide support for other special and mainstream schools on a range of issues relating to the school's specialism.
- The quality of teaching is managed effectively through regular checks on lessons by senior leaders. Staff are keen to improve their performance so sharing of good practice and seeking further training are high in their priorities. Newly appointed teachers have settled well and benefit from the substantial support of leaders and colleagues.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly committed to the success of the school and are closely involved with it. Using the information they are provided with and from their regular visits to see the school at work, they gain a good insight into it and know it well. Governors have undertaken training and this has improved their understanding of their responsibilities, particularly around being able to challenge leaders when necessary. They are strengthening further their engagement with the school, such as having each governor attached to a class and a teacher. While they receive detailed information on pupils' performance, they are at an early stage of interpreting the data critically. However, they are kept well informed by the headteacher about the quality of teaching and how teachers' performance management, professional development and salary progression are improving teaching. They are effective in checking that the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet requirements and they check that the pupil premium is put to good use for the pupils it is meant to support.

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	106970
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	403781

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Smith
Headteacher	Anne Sanderson
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2009
Telephone number	01709 542539
Fax number	01709 703198
Email address	willows.school@rotherham.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

