

The Willows Primary School

Pyle Hill, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 7SJ

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils of all abilities make good progress from their starting points. They leave the school reaching standards which are broadly average.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good and sometimes outstanding progress because the support they receive is well matched to their needs.
- The experiences children have in the Early Years Foundation Stage provide them with a secure foundation to their education. There is a focus on developing their communication skills and this means that they develop the language they need to learn well.
- Teachers mark work very thoroughly and give pupils very helpful information about how they can improve their work.
- Pupils, staff and parents and carers all say that the school is a safe place.
- Reading is given high priority and pupils are encouraged to develop a love of reading from an early age.
- Pupils who are going through challenging times are given very good support, for both their academic and their emotional development.
- Attendance has improved significantly because of the high priority the school gives to ensuring that parents, carers and pupils all know how important good attendance is.
- The variety of subjects is interesting and the excellent range of visits and visitors the school arranges bring the topics to life.
- Leaders drive forward improvement. They have high expectations for the pupils and they know how the school can be even better.
- All leaders, including governors, share the headteacher's vision and are doing all the right things to achieve the school's goals.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The most able pupils are not always given work which is challenging enough for them to reach the higher levels in mathematics and English.
- Progress in mathematics is slower than in English, particularly at Key Stage 1, because teachers do not always give pupils work which provides the right level of challenge.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 22 lessons and parts of lessons, some of which were joint observations with the executive headteacher and the head of school.
- Discussions were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, middle leaders, members of the governing body, two representatives from the local authority, parents, carers and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 33 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the views of parents and carers from discussions in the playground.
- Information about how well school leaders know how good the school is and their plans for school improvement, as well as assessment information, minutes of meetings with the governing body, teachers' planning, pupils' work and safeguarding procedures were examined.
- Inspectors analysed 40 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Jeanne Simpson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gill Walley

Additional Inspector

Philip Littlejohn

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Willows is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for those pupils eligible for free school meals, those in care and those with a parent or carer in the armed services, is much higher than average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is slightly lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a first language other than English is increasing, particularly at Key Stage 1.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is slightly lower than the national average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher is also headteacher of Hampstead Norreys Primary School.
- The headteacher is a National Leader of Education.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the most able pupils are always given work in both English and mathematics which provides the challenge they need to enable them to achieve as well as possible in lessons.
- Raise standards in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 1, by:
 - being less reliant on worksheets so that activities are more closely matched to individual needs
 - using questions in lessons more precisely to identify the pupils who need more help and to allow pupils who understand the new learning to move on to more challenging work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has risen steadily over the last three years. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils reach average standards in English and mathematics.
- They make progress which is at least good and sometimes outstanding in all year groups and tracking information shows that rates of progress are improving year on year.
- When children enter Nursery and Reception, their skills and understanding are well below the levels expected for their age, particularly in communication and language. The way pupils' learning is planned, including for children whose home language is not English, really helps them to develop their communication skills and every adult knows how important this area is. They are given excellent help and support to develop in every way and by the time they enter Year 1 they are working at the levels expected for their age.
- Children are encouraged to develop a love of reading from an early age and the school has made great efforts to ensure that pupils are given the skills that they need in phonics (the sounds letters make) to become fluent readers. The number of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics reading check has improved and all the pupils who did not reach the standard in Year 1 were successful when they were rechecked in Year 2.
- Pupils continue to make good progress throughout their time in the school. However, progress in mathematics is slightly slower, because the work pupils are given is not challenging enough for them to reach the higher levels at the end of both key stages. This means that achievement is not outstanding. The school has already taken steps to improve these outcomes in the future, but it is too early to judge the full impact of these strategies.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good and they reach standards which are broadly in line with those expected nationally. This is because very careful thought is given to the best way to help each individual child and the extra support pupils receive is regular and of high quality.
- The achievement of pupils who are eligible for the additional funding through the pupil premium is also good for similar reasons. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are about a term behind their peers, but by the end of Key Stage 2 they have caught up well and are above similar pupils nationally.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers consistently share with pupils what they are going to learn in the lesson so that they are prepared for the new ideas they will meet. Pupils are often asked to comment on how well they think they have done and they are used to talking about their learning.
- Teachers mark work very carefully and tell pupils what they need to do next to do even better. They often give pupils more examples to do so that they can show that they have improved and this helps them to learn well.
- All pupils have targets in both English and mathematics and they are kept fresh in pupils' minds because teachers refer to them in lessons. Some lessons are specially planned so that pupils can practise the skills they need in order to reach their target, and homework also contributes very well to moving pupils on.
- Work in writing is well planned and pupils are taught the basic skills they need to be successful writers. They are given opportunities to practise their skills through longer pieces of writing. However, not all teachers plan writing activities in other subjects and as a result, the most able pupils are not given the chance to respond more creatively to tasks.
- In mathematics lessons, teachers do not always use questions carefully enough to check on whether pupils are ready to start their work. This means that some pupils get stuck because they do not understand, while others, who have good understanding, are not given the opportunities they need to work on more challenging activities. Teachers also rely too much on

worksheets which are not always well matched to pupils' needs and therefore impacts on pupils' learning.

- Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well. They notice who needs help and they ask questions which help the pupils to move on in their learning. Teachers plan the work of the teaching assistants so that they do not always give their time to one group. This makes sure that pupils are not too reliant on adult support and they are helped to develop the skills they need to work on their own and solve their own problems.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught well. Teachers and teaching assistants are innovative in the methods they use so that pupils have experiences which help them to remember what they have been learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The way in which the school manages behaviour helps the pupils to think about the choices they make. A lot of time is given to discussing feelings which helps pupils to empathise and reflect on the consequences of their actions.
- Pupils do not always come to the classroom ready to learn and teachers work hard to ensure that the learning in lessons is not disrupted by poor behaviour. There is a high number of pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour and they are given very sensitive support.
- There are lots of adults outside as pupils arrive in the morning so that if pupils or parents and carers are going through challenging times, there is always someone available to talk to. This helps the day to get off to a smooth start.
- In the past, behaviour has been of concern. A new system for managing incidents has been introduced which has given much more responsibility to teachers, rather than reporting incidents straight to the headteacher. As a result, behaviour has improved and the number of incidents has reduced over time, though the school knows that there is still room for improvement.
- The records the school keeps show that there are good processes in place to manage more serious incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Pupils and, if appropriate, their families are given support to prevent such incidents happening again. Exclusions are below the national average and are only used as a last resort.
- Parents, carers and pupils agree that the school is a safe place. Great efforts have been made to make sure that pupils know about what bullying is and the school has won an award for its anti-bullying work.
- Pupils enjoy playing in the generous amount of space they have available. At lunchtime there is a range of games and equipment for them to play with and the older pupils enjoy helping with the playground games. There are quiet areas for pupils to sit and the 'Smokey Mountain' adventure trail is very popular.
- Attendance has improved and is now above the national average, because pupils enjoy coming to school and the school has made sure that parents, carers and pupils know how important regular attendance is.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Over the last four years the headteacher has provided exceptionally strong leadership which has resulted in significant improvements to all aspects of the school's work. She has made sure that other leaders, including governors, have also developed the skills and qualities they need. On the days when she is based at the other school for which she is also the headteacher, other leaders can take over confidently. As a result, the school has strong capacity to continue to improve.
- Parents and carers recognise the journey of improvement that the school has been on. All parents and carers who expressed an opinion about the quality of leadership and management through the online survey (Parent View) strongly agreed that the school was well led and

managed and 97% would recommend the school to another parent or carer.

- All leaders are involved in monitoring the effectiveness of the school and they are all aware of what is going well and what needs to improve. They have very clear plans for the areas which are still not as good as they would want them to be. The actions they have identified are the right ones to bring about the changes needed.
- The regular checks that are made on the quality of teaching and the school's systems for performance management have made sure that the quality of teaching has improved. Staff do not progress to the next pay levels unless their targets have been met.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education because literacy is taught very well and pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have made every effort to make sure that the increasing number of pupils who join during the school year have a good induction. For an increasing number of these pupils, English is not their home language and the school provides bilingual worksheets in class as well as bilingual homework in order to involve parents and carers and help the pupils to feel secure.
- The range of subjects is very interesting and pupils enjoy the topics they study. One recent topic was entitled 'Stories People Tell'. This provided an opportunity for parents and carers from all cultures within the school to join in and share their traditional tales. Parents and carers are invited into school at the beginning of every term to hear about the topics the pupils will be studying and to find out how they can get involved.
- The additional government funding for sport is being used to provide a wider range of activities such as rock climbing and horse riding outside school, as well as more clubs and activities at lunchtime and after school. As a result, participation rates and pupils' levels of fitness and enjoyment of sport have improved.
- There is a very extensive range of visits and visitors which really helps to broaden pupils' experiences and provide a meaningful context for writing. During the inspection, many classes were using the whole school visit to the pantomime to stimulate the writing of reviews, letters to the actors and reports on the visit.
- These experiences, together with opportunities to play musical instruments, the responsibilities that pupils can take on and the clear moral code in the school all contribute to the effective way in which the school ensures that pupils' spiritual, emotional, social and cultural understanding is developed.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively. All adults model high levels of respect for all pupils and every effort is made to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are met.
- Procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully secure.
- The local authority provides an appropriate level of support. The good practice in the school is used to support other schools and the headteacher's leadership skills are recognised through her role as a National Leader of Education.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are proud of the improvements the school has made in the last three years and they are committed to making sure that the school continues to improve. They make sure that their skills are used well to support and challenge the school and they regularly attend courses to improve their skills further. They know exactly what the school is doing well and what needs to improve because they regularly visit the school and talk to leaders. They use data well to compare achievement with achievement nationally and they ask challenging questions so that they understand what actions the school is taking to raise standards further. They know about the quality of teaching and they make sure that only the best teachers are rewarded through progression through the pay scales. They monitor carefully the way that pupil premium and sports funding is used and they know that it is making a difference to pupils' achievement.

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	135213
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	426323

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hilary Purton
Headteacher	Alexandra Butler
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 September 2011
Telephone number	01635 42155
Email address	office@willows.w-berkshire.sch.uk

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