

Willow Primary School

Wexham Road, Slough, SL2 5FF

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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:

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress across classes and subjects. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is on track to be below average in writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, or who are supported through the pupil premium, do not always make as much progress as their peers in writing and, sometimes, in mathematics.
- The most-able pupils are not always challenged in lessons and adults do not consistently check on pupils' understanding or move learning on at an appropriate pace.
- Teachers do not always set work at the right level for pupils or provide clear guidance in marked work about how pupils can move forward in their learning. Pupils are not always expected to respond to comments in marked work.
- Actions taken by senior leaders to raise achievement across the school have not had time to have a full impact on pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics in Years 5 and 6, mainly because some pupils in these years are new to the school.
- A few middle leaders do not use assessment information rigorously enough to improve rates of progress for some pupils, particularly at the higher levels, in upper Key Stage 2 classes.
- A minority of parents believe that leaders do not involve parents in their children's learning as well as they could and do not engage as effectively as possible with some parents who may find working with the school difficult.

The school has the following strengths:

- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 improved in 2013 to be in line with the national average. Checks on the quality of teaching and the tracking of pupils across Key Stages 1 and 2 are accurate.
- The governing body has a good understanding of school performance and offers good support and challenge to the school.
- The vast majority of parents are entirely supportive of leaders.
- Pupils behave well at the school and feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- The school had half a day's notice of the inspection which took place over two days.
- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. Some of these observations were conducted with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, leaders and managers and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors held informal discussions with parents. They also took account of 15 responses to the Parent View online survey and 16 questionnaire responses from staff, as well as an analysis of over 100 responses to the school's recent parent questionnaire.
- They looked at pupils' work in lessons and also, separately, with leaders. Inspectors heard pupils reading and observed them in class and around the school, including at informal times.
- A wide range of school documentation was considered. This included: information provided by the school relating to the attainment and progress of pupils and groups of pupils across the school; the performance management of staff; evidence of checks on teaching by the school; the school's website; the school's action plans; minutes from governing body meetings; the school's self-evaluation; and behaviour records and safeguarding information.

Inspection team

Najoud Ensaff, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rekha Bakhoo

Additional Inspector

Catherine Thompson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Willow Primary is larger than the average primary school.
- Pupils come from a diverse range of cultural heritages. The largest group of pupils comes from a Pakistani background and the next largest comes from an Eastern European background. In 2013, these groups accounted for just over half the pupils. There are few pupils from a White British background. There is an above-average level of mobility, with pupils joining and leaving the school other than at the usual times.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. Some of these join the school speaking very little English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority or those with a parent in the armed services, is above average.
- The school opened in 2010 and, until this year, it did not have any Year 6 pupils. The large majority of pupils are in classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Year 3.
- The school is on track to meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been significant changes to staffing recently, including the appointment of three newly qualified teachers and two teachers taking part in the 'Teach First' programme.
- The school is part of an academy trust made up of two schools. It became an academy in February 2013. The executive headteacher leads both schools and is also supporting another local school. The associate headteacher was appointed in April 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good to support fast progress for all pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers always use assessment information effectively to set work at the right level for pupils of different abilities and needs
 - teachers always provide pupils with clear guidance about how to improve and expect that the guidance they give them in marked work will always be responded to
 - adults consistently check on pupils' understanding in lessons, and move learning on at an appropriate pace.
- Sharpen the skills of all middle leaders:
 - so that they understand better how to use assessment information effectively to accelerate rates of progress for pupils and to raise attainment so that it is at least in line with the national average, with an increased proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels, particularly in upper Key Stage 2 classes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The progress of pupils, including those who join the school other than at usual times, is not consistently good in English and mathematics. Work in pupils' books supports this view of progress.
- Children enter the school with skills which are below those typically found for their age, particularly in communication and language. Although there have been recent improvements to provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and to teaching, particularly across Key Stage 1, these have not had time to have a full impact on pupils' attainment across the rest of the school.
- Although attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has improved and rose to average in mathematics in 2013, attainment in writing and reading was just below average. Current school information indicates that attainment in writing and, sometimes, mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2 classes, is below average.
- While attainment at the higher levels is improving at the end of Key Stage 1, attainment at the end of Year 6 is on track to be below average in English and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, some of whom are supported through the pupil premium, do not make as much progress as they should.
- The most able pupils do not always make good progress because they are not always well challenged in lessons.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress, and they attained better than similar pupils nationally at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013.
- Pupils of Pakistani and Eastern European heritages (who accounted for just over half of Year 6 pupils last year) generally make good progress.
- Although the attainment of the very few White British pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 improved in 2013, their attainment was below that of similar pupils nationally. Current progress information indicates that the progress these few pupils make across the school is not as good as that of their peers. This is sometimes because they have additional learning needs.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and they make good and sometimes rapid gains in their learning. Last year an above average proportion of children left Reception classes having achieved a good level of development.
- Pupils' scores in the Year 1 phonics check (linking sounds and letters) in 2013 improved to above the national average, and current data suggest that Year 1 pupils will do as well as others nationally in the phonics check and may exceed national expectations this year.
- Gaps in attainment between pupils supported through the pupil premium and their peers are narrowing, with eligible pupils attaining as well as their peers in most classes in English and mathematics. In 2013 pupils supported through the pupil premium attained better than similar pupils nationally at the end of Key Stage 1 in English and mathematics. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain as well as their peers in reading and mathematics and better than their peers by just over half a term in writing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to set work at the right level for pupils with different abilities and needs. As a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not always make good progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, praising achievements and posing a question, but they do not always give pupils specific enough guidance about their next steps in learning. Pupils are not always sure about how to move to the next level in their work.
- Teachers do not always expect pupils to respond to comments in marked work by, for example,

editing or extending their work. Consequently, the gains pupils make in their learning are not consistently good.

- In lessons, adults do not always check on whether pupils understand what they are doing or what they have learnt. As a result, they do not always move pupils on in their learning at an appropriate pace.
- The challenge provided to the most able pupils is not consistently good so their learning sometimes slows.
- Teachers create a positive climate for learning through, for example, lively displays which celebrate pupils' achievements and which provide pupils with ideas about different approaches to take in their learning.
- Pupils' social development is well promoted through, for example, good opportunities to share their learning in groups or in pairs, and their moral development is well promoted through assemblies and teachers' expectations of their good behaviour.
- Pupils' work in lessons is supported through homework, which the large majority of parents believe is appropriate for pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Typically they behave well, listen to one another and are attentive. As a result, even in lessons where teaching is not strong, they are able to make some gains in their learning and knowledge.
- Pupils said that behaviour around the school is good and that only very occasionally in lessons do one or two pupils disengage from work when it is not interesting or they are not moved on in their learning quickly enough.
- Observations of pupils during the inspection indicated that they behaved well in lessons and at informal times, playing well together and responding quickly to instructions. The large majority of parents agree that behaviour is good in the school. Logs of behaviour and staff comments support the view that this good behaviour is usual.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school because there are always adults and friends around. They know what to do in case of a fire and have a clear understanding of how to keep safe when travelling to school and when using the internet.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what bullying is and they understand about different forms of bullying such as verbal, physical, racist and emotional bullying. They report that bullying is rare and that it is almost always effectively handled by the school. Although a minority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey indicated that they believed bullying was not well handled, the large majority of parents said that their children felt safe and were well taken care of. School records of bullying confirm that incidents are few and that appropriate actions are taken. The school's analysis of a recent parent questionnaire also supports the view that parents believe their children are safe at the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong, and the vast majority of pupils are polite and friendly. They are proud of their achievements and take good care of school equipment and their surroundings.
- There have been no permanent exclusions of pupils in the past few years. Pupils' attendance has improved and is now much closer to the national average for all groups of pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- All staff believe that the school is well led and managed. The large majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey and the vast majority who responded to the school's parent questionnaires also believe that the school is well led and managed.

- Senior leaders have improved provision in the Early Years Foundations Stage, raised attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and raised achievement and teaching within the school. They have also improved attendance. The capacity for further improvement is therefore evident.
- Pupils are now making good progress in reading and their progress in writing and mathematics is improving, but actions taken to raise standards have not had enough time to have a full impact on pupils' attainment in Key Stage 2 classes in particular.
- Leaders have an accurate view of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in the school. Their good checks on the quality of teaching have enabled them to identify strengths and areas for development accurately. Best practice within the trust is being shared across the school, through coaching staff and observations of lessons. Additional staff training linked to identified areas for development is also provided to teachers.
- Actions for school improvement are based on an accurate understanding of school performance. These are well planned, with clear personnel identified and milestones signposted.
- Middle leaders support senior leaders well but senior leaders agree that some middle leaders' understanding of assessment information is not as rigorous as it needs to be to accelerate progress and raise attainment, particularly across upper Key Stage 2 classes in writing and mathematics.
- Senior leaders track the attainment and progress of pupils and groups of pupils closely across Key Stages 1 and 2, and are extending this detailed tracking into the Early Years Foundation Stage in order to build on the current good provision there.
- The large majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend the school to other parents. Most believe their children are happy at the school.
- A minority of parents indicated that they do not receive as much information about their children's progress as they would like and that communication is not always as good as possible. The inspection team found that the school provides useful information about subjects and events to parents but agrees with senior leaders that more could be done to engage more effectively with parents who find working with the school difficult, so that they are more involved in their children's learning.
- While gaps in learning between some groups of pupils are starting to close, there are gaps between the progress made by some disabled pupils and those with special educational needs or the most able and their peers. Leaders' promotion of equality is therefore adequate rather than good. They have appropriate policies in place to ensure that discrimination is not tolerated.
- Leaders have a track record of tackling underperformance well, and they ensure that progression along pay scales is securely linked to teachers' performance.
- Appropriately organised subjects provide pupils with opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills, and pupils benefit from interesting educational visits, such as those to the Imperial War Museum and Hampton Court Palace, which extend their learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted through lessons, a range of extra-curricular clubs, assemblies and educational visits.
- Pupils have good opportunities to take part in physical activities and inter-school competitions. The school is looking to increase these so that pupils' health and well-being improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body takes an active role in the school's self-evaluation and strategic planning. As a result of this and of additional training, the governing body has a good understanding of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in the school. Governors ask searching questions about, for example, the progress and attendance of pupils. They ensure that pupil premium funding is used well, for example through providing a mini-bus and booster lessons, so that eligible pupils attend regularly and gaps in attainment between eligible pupils and their peers are closing. They ensure that sports funding is spent appropriately on specialist coaching, high quality resources and participation in more competitive sports, and they ensure that the impact of this funding on pupils' participation rates in sport and their health and well-being is carefully measured. The governing body ensures that there is a clear link between teachers' performance and salary progression and knows how underperformance is tackled. It

ensures that safeguarding meets requirements.

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	139198
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	441279

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	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dennis Kitchener
Headteacher	Gill Denham
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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