

Willowbank Primary School

Manitoba Gardens, Cullompton, Devon, EX15 1EZ

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress, especially in mathematics. There are gaps in what pupils know, can do and understand in this subject in Years 2 to 5.
- Some teachers do not expect enough of pupils. At times, the work set is too easy and this slows down pupils' progress.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage does not provide sufficient opportunities to develop the writing skills of more able pupils.
- Leaders and managers have not been rigorous in ensuring that pupils' achievement is good over time.
- Until recently, middle leaders have not had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have not made effective use of information about how well pupils are achieving over time. They have been slow to tackle weaknesses. Progress has slowed in mathematics for lower attaining girls.
- The curriculum provides too few opportunities for pupils to understand the cultural diversity in modern Britain.
- The governing body has been too reliant on information from the headteacher; it has not checked the school's performance, or its safeguarding arrangements, closely enough. Consequently, the school's leaders have not been held to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards in reading are higher than the national average. Pupils make good and often better than expected progress in reading.
- The achievement of boys was above the national average for all pupils in reading and mathematics at Year 2 and Year 6 in the 2014 statutory assessment tasks.
- The teaching of basic literacy skills results in Year 1 pupils achieving above the national average in Year 1 phonics checks.
- Year 6 pupils achieve above the national average in grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Pupils behave well, say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Attendance is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons, three of which were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors observed an assembly, breakfast club and made short visits to classes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers with subject responsibilities and five members of the governing body. Telephone calls took place between the lead inspector and a representative from the local authority, and between the inclusion lead and a team inspector.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school’s plans for improvement, records of lesson observations, governor records, information on pupils’ progress and work in pupils’ books. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils as well as individual pupils during lessons and at play and lunchtimes. They heard individual pupils from Years 2 and 6 read.
- Inspectors took account of conversations with a small group of parents, 46 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well one other written response from a parent, and the school’s own parent survey results. They checked information on the school’s website and took into consideration 31 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Jennifer Cutler	Additional Inspector
Howard Dodd	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an averaged-sized primary school with an expanding number of pupils on roll.
- The school has responded flexibly to higher pupil numbers. This year, the Reception class and Years 1 and 6 are taught in single year groups. There are five mixed classes, two classes of Years 2 and 3 pupils and three classes of Years 4 and 5 pupils.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is average. This is the extra government funding given to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- Early years provision is full time.
- Most pupils are from a White British heritage. The proportions of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are both below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics, particularly in Years 2 to 5, so it is consistently good or better by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - use information about what children know, can do and understand to plan activities that result in good progress for all groups of pupils.
- Raise achievement in writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage by making sure that:
 - adults have consistently high expectations of what children can achieve in writing
 - adults make better use of knowing what children can do in writing to ensure they are provided with sufficient challenge.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders check on pupils' progress regularly so that they can take swift action to bring about improvements
 - middle leaders develop their knowledge of pupil progress across the school and use this knowledge to support and challenge other teachers to raise standards
 - governors frequently gather first-hand information on the progress of the school's work so they can hold leaders to account for improving the school
 - governors are rigorous in checking the school's safeguarding arrangements
 - the curriculum provides more opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the diversity of cultures in preparation for their life in modern Britain.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management must be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not acted with sufficient urgency to halt the decline in achievement. For example, there has been slow progress and below average standards in Year 2 for the past two years. However, leaders are now taking effective action to improve teaching and standards are beginning to recover.
- Leaders have made effective use of pupil premium funding to close the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Support staff are now deployed to work more closely with disadvantaged pupils. All staff are held to account for the progress pupils make.
- Pupils benefit from taking part in many extra-curricular activities and a broad range of playtime sports. The school promotes equality of opportunity well. Pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is supported well through the consistent application of the school's core values. However, the curriculum is not being used effectively to develop pupils' basic skills in mathematics in Years 2 to 5 and this is hindering pupils' readiness for the next stage of their education.
- The school is effective in tackling discrimination; however, the curriculum does not provide sufficient information for pupils to learn about the cultural diversity in modern Britain.
- Until recently, middle leaders were not fully involved in raising standards. Leaders now provide training for middle leaders to develop their skills in checking the quality of teaching in the school. Middle leaders are using these skills to support improvements in teaching.
- The headteacher makes accurate judgements on teaching and learning and provides clear next steps for teachers to improve their practice. Teaching is improving because of this guidance.
- The headteacher has provided governors with an accurate evaluation of the school's work. The school improvement plan accurately identifies key areas for improvement but, until recently, actions to tackle weaknesses lacked precision and were not regularly checked. As a result, pupil progress has been hindered, particularly in mathematics.
- An overwhelming majority of parents speak positively about the leadership of the school and say that their children are happy going to school. Several parents said that their children did not like having to stay away from school if they were unwell.
- The school uses the sport funding successfully to improve pupils' participation and achievement in sport. Staff confidence and expertise have been developed and this has led to higher quality experiences for pupils. For example, there have been improvements in the teaching of dance. There has been an increased uptake in sporting activities. Over half the school now takes part in a sport or fitness club and pupils enjoy taking part in half-termly house fixtures.
- The school arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Records reflect that the school takes prompt action, with a parent support adviser, linking and working closely with a range of external agencies to ensure the well-being and safety of children looked after by the local authority and vulnerable pupils.
- The local authority identified a dip in standards and has been providing support for the school since January 2014. A local authority representative has made four visits to the school, which has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The leader of mathematics is implementing a plan of action to tackle weaknesses in mathematics as a result of the effective support brokered by the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has some knowledge of the school's main strengths and weaknesses, but governors have been too reliant on information from the headteacher rather than checking for themselves. They do not always hold leaders to account by asking challenging questions in meetings. They regularly visit the school but fail to check with sufficient rigour whether plans are bringing about improvements. For example, the poorer progress of lower ability girls in mathematics has not been a particular focus for visits.
 - The governing body knows how additional funding is being spent and checks effectively that it is successful in closing the gaps in attainment for disadvantaged pupils.

- The governing body has clear processes linking teachers' pay with performance and has used these to hold leaders to account. However, governors have not had high enough expectations around securing improvements in teaching over time.
- The governing body's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Governors have been vigilant in identifying weak practice in the administration of safeguarding procedures, but have not followed this up with sufficient rigour to ensure that improvements are sustained.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They enjoy coming to school and, as a result, attendance is higher than the national average.
- Leaders keep detailed and precise records of behaviour. These show that, although rare, incidents of poor behaviour are followed up. Most parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, agree that the school makes sure pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils are attentive and responsive in most lessons. Pupils are quick to follow instructions and prompt to settle to work. Teachers implement the school's behaviour policy consistently across the school and, as a result, pupils are polite and courteous to one another. Pupils say that there is very little disruption in lessons, and inspectors concur with this view.
- The breakfast club provides a healthy menu and is well attended. Staff welcome the children and good relationships contribute to a positive start to the day. As a result, pupils are ready to learn.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils' safe and secure requires improvement.
- Governors identified weaknesses in the administration of safeguarding documentation, but were not thorough in following up their concerns. Leaders have not been rigorous in ensuring that the improvements made to the administrative procedures were sustained.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of safety issues. For example, they identified that playground slopes could be a potential health and safety problem if children chose to play on them.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They say that they feel safe in school and are confident that they have adults to turn to when needed. Pupils speak knowledgeably about e-safety. Year 6 pupils show that they are confident to stick to their own beliefs and values and would not be easily influenced by others.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The teaching of mathematics is not consistent across the school. Books show that some teachers' expectations are not always high enough. Some of the work in Years 2 to 5 does not challenge pupils, and work in books shows they spend too much time practising calculation skills that they have already mastered.
- The most effective marking and feedback can be seen in the writing books of pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6. Teachers give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their writing. Pupils have regular and timely opportunities to respond to the teacher's guidance and, in doing so, they improve the quality of their writing. However, the quality of marking in other subjects is less effective and does not lead to rapid progress.

- Not all teachers make enough use of the information they have on how much children know, can do and understand. This prevents them matching activities to challenge and deepen pupils' understanding and results in slower progress. For example, the lack of high expectations in standards of writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage is resulting in less progress in writing compared to pupils' listening and attention skills. Similarly, the lack of appropriate match of activities to pupils' learning needs in mathematics in Years 2 to 5 is resulting in slow progress for lower achieving girls.
- Support staff lead afternoon, small group and one-to-one sessions for pupils. These sessions are effective in closing gaps in learning and are enabling pupils to make greater rates of progress in English in particular.
- Where teaching is most successful, teachers are confident to adapt their plans to enable all pupils to learn effectively, including pupils eligible for extra funding and those who speak English as an additional language. For example, teachers in Year 1 are astute in checking how much pupils know and can do in phonics (letters and the sounds they make). As a result, a higher proportion than average reaches the standards expected in the Year 1 phonics check.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils are able to identify key words, get information from pictures and apply their good phonic knowledge to make sense of the text. Most pupils read with expression and fluency by the end of Year 2.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards of attainment are broadly in line with national averages in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. However, this does not represent good progress for those pupils who join the school with skills at least typical for their age.
- In Years 2 to 5, too few pupils make good progress in mathematics. Pupils catch up in Year 6, but not all make good progress to reach the standards they are capable of.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been below the national average for the last two years, with small steps of decline in pupils' average point scores each year. This decline has been halted and, in 2014, writing and mathematics outcomes were broadly in line with the national average.
- Historically, higher attaining pupils have not made good progress. A lower proportion of pupils achieve higher levels in writing at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, greater catch up is needed as pupils progress through the school. In the 2014 statutory assessment tests, a greater proportion than other children nationally achieved at the higher levels in reading and mathematics at Year 2 for the first time in five years. Boys in the school achieved above average attainment compared to all pupils nationally.
- A smaller proportion of pupils than that found nationally achieved better than expected progress in mathematics at the end of Year 6. Work in books shows that more able pupils in Years 2 to 5 are not always provided with work that leads to rapid gains in their skills and understanding in mathematics.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs requires improvement. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 who have special educational needs make less progress in mathematics than in other subjects. Individual plans for these pupils are well matched and greater proportions are achieving their targets this year than previously. Lower attaining girls make less progress than lower attaining boys, particularly in mathematics.
- In 2014, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally was reduced to two terms in mathematics, less than a term in writing and disadvantaged pupils achieved better than those nationally in reading and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well. The school is quick to make effective links with families and external agencies to ensure that these pupils settle quickly into school and make good progress.

- Pupils in Year 1 achieve above average results in their phonics check. This contributes to the high proportion of pupils who achieve higher rates of expected progress in reading at both Year 2 and Year 6 than pupils nationally. Similarly, pupils' attainment in English grammar, punctuation and spelling at Year 6 is above the national average.
- The work in literacy and topic books shows that pupils in Year 6 are responding effectively to the challenge provided by teachers' marking and feedback, and this is resulting in rapid progress for some pupils.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Leaders do not currently develop good links with pre-schools to support skills in the accuracy of assessing how well children are achieving. This hinders the amount of progress some children make when they first join the school.
- In 2014, a high proportion of the children joining the school had skills typical for their age. There are insufficient opportunities for the more able children to develop the good writing skills they already have when they join the school.
- Leaders know the children well. However, they do not always make good use of the information gathered about children's progress to adapt play activities to encourage improvement.
- Teachers check and record children's progress across the areas of learning, but the activities planned are not always closely related to individual needs. The children's work is not well organised and, as a result, it is unclear what children need to do next to make good progress.
- There is a good balance between adult-led sessions and activities for children to select for themselves. Children sustain good levels of concentration and cooperate well together. They move around both indoor and outdoor environments without harm and show respect for the environment, using equipment safely.
- All staff work together well to create a calm and welcoming environment for the children. Well organised routines help children settle quickly into school life. Parents are encouraged to record and share their children's achievements and good relationships are fostered between the school and families. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the smooth start their children make in school.
- Children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage ready for Year 1 with particularly high levels of skills in communication and language.

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	113119
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	449156

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Land
Headteacher	Simon Atherton
Date of previous school inspection	8 September 2010
Telephone number	01884 33473
Fax number	01884 34318
Email address	admin@willowbank.devon.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 and 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 2014

