

Willowbank Primary School

Manitoba Gardens, Cullompton, Devon EX15 1EZ

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Despite improvements during the past year, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly lower down the school.
- Some disadvantaged pupils, and some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not make as much progress from their starting points as their peers do.
- Some of the most able pupils do not reach the level of attainment they should by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' progress in writing is not rapid enough, particularly in key stage 1.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work is not as good as it should be, especially lower down the school.
- Teaching requires improvement because it has been inconsistent in quality since the previous inspection.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially in key stage 1 and in lower key stage 2.
- Curriculum planning does not ensure that there is progression in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in some subjects as they move through the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has brought about several significant improvements during her first year in post. The school shows a strong capacity for continued improvement.
- Governance has improved.
- School leaders now check teaching, learning and pupils' progress much more incisively.
- Children in Reception are taught well and make good progress.
- Behaviour has improved and is now good. Pupils enjoy all aspects of school life and feel very safe. The quality of care for pupils is outstanding.
- Parents recognise the improvements that have been made and support the school strongly.
- Staff successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school focuses strongly on strengthening pupils' awareness of British values.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that it becomes consistently good, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, whatever their prior levels of attainment
 - planning work effectively so that pupils build progressively on their prior learning
 - strengthening the emphasis on consistently good-quality handwriting and presentation of pupils' work.
- Improve attainment and progress in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 by more consistently meeting pupils' learning needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, through her drive and determination for the school to succeed, has made significant improvements to the school since she took up her post just under one year ago. As a result, the school has improved in several key aspects, including behaviour and provision for children in Reception. Parents commented on this, typically saying, 'considerable effort is going into turning the school around,' and 'the school has improved noticeably.'
- The great majority of parents, pupils, governors and staff recognise the improvements which the leadership has made, and they share the headteacher's ambition for the school. The impact of actions taken over the past year and the evident commitment of school leaders and staff show that the school has a strong capacity to improve further.
- School leaders now evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development accurately and have planned appropriately for further improvement.
- In addition to restructuring the senior leadership team, the headteacher has made the checking of the quality of teaching and learning more rigorous and systematic. This is having a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, both in lessons and assemblies. This is evident, for example, in the work which older pupils do in considering what is important in life to them and how they can make an impact on the world around them. Pupils also reflect maturely on their work, for example when analysing and comparing war poetry.
- School leaders pay particular attention to getting pupils to think about British values such as tolerance and the right to express a range of views. For example, pupils reflect on how their procedures for electing the school council compare with the United Kingdom's parliamentary democracy. Pupils have also interviewed local councillors about their role in the local community.
- The school has been very successful in maintaining a culture of care and inclusivity so that all pupils, whatever their background, feel equally valued.
- The school has implemented a new method of assessment, which enables staff to more quickly identify which particular pupils would benefit from additional support in order to achieve better. The school has also developed a new curriculum. The success of this can be seen in pupils' enjoyment of their lessons. This was evident from what they told inspectors and from the results of a pupil survey.
- School leaders have used pupil premium funding well, for example by giving individual support to disadvantaged pupils and providing them with more opportunities, such as attending the breakfast club.
- The sport premium has been used effectively, particularly in funding a sports specialist to provide additional activities for pupils and increase their participation in sport.
- Some important initiatives are relatively new and there have been several recent changes in staffing, so that new systems and the higher expectations of school leaders are not yet embedded. This is why pupils do not yet achieve as well as they should.

- The local authority has provided the school with effective support to improve teaching and governance.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Governors are more knowledgeable about the school and understand their responsibilities better, partly through receiving good training. New governors have brought additional skills to the governing body.
- Governors are now more active in school. They check pupils' progress for themselves and have a much better understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. They also know how well pupils at Willowbank compare in their rates of progress with pupils elsewhere. They know what can still be improved. Governors now have a better understanding of the impact of initiatives such as pupil premium funding and primary sport premium funding.
- Governors now hold the school to account, as well as supporting the leadership in the drive for continued improvement. They ask school leaders to explain their actions, for example when the school implemented a revised reading scheme. They also make sure that school leaders administer performance management of staff effectively. Teachers' pay is now closely linked to meaningful targets and success in promoting pupils' progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to protect pupils, and all staff know them. Staff and governors have had appropriate and recent training to update their awareness of how radicalisation and extremism can affect schools. Staff know how they should recognise potential issues relating to safeguarding and how they should deal with them. School leaders also give parents advice on how to keep pupils safe. Staff ensure that the school site is secure, check attendance carefully and follow up any resulting concerns about absence.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because some of the weaknesses found at the previous inspection have not yet been eliminated. The headteacher has been working to raise the quality of teaching while integrating several new staff into the school, but the intended improvements are not yet fully embedded. Teaching over time has not been effective enough to ensure that pupils are as well prepared as they should be for their move to another school at the end of Year 6.
- Teachers have not ensured that pupils achieve as well as they should in lessons. Sometimes teachers do not provide enough challenge for the most able pupils, as is evident in work in their books.
- Although the few most able disadvantaged pupils are taught well and make good progress as a result of the support they receive, other disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress they should in some classes.
- The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has

improved, partly because teachers now deploy teaching assistants more effectively. However, their progress is still inconsistent.

- Some teaching of reading and mathematics has not enabled pupils of differing levels of ability to achieve as well as they might. This is because teaching has not taken sufficient account of the need to plan for progression as pupils move from one year to the next.
- Not all teachers put sufficient emphasis on developing pupils' handwriting and presentation skills, particularly lower down the school.
- Teachers now teach phonics more effectively, as is evident in the improving results of Year 1 pupils in the most recent phonics check. Results are now above the national average.
- Teachers apply the school policy on marking and feedback consistently so that pupils know how well they have done and what they have to do to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants make a better contribution to pupils' learning than at the previous inspection. Like the teaching staff, teaching assistants have benefited from good opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills.
- Staff told the inspectors how they valued the professional training opportunities provided, for example, through links with the local authority and other local schools.
- Most parents and staff themselves recognise that teaching has improved during the past year. School leaders accept that these improvements are not yet embedded consistently, which is why teaching needs continuing improvement.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The pupils themselves, and their parents, are full of praise for the quality of care and support provided by the school. This contributes significantly to them feeling very safe in school. In particular, staff put a lot of effort into ensuring that potentially vulnerable pupils receive strong support both inside and outside the classroom.
- Pupils like taking on roles of responsibility. They are enthusiastic about their school council and are very community spirited, for example when raising funds for charities.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons, school trips such as the residential visits to activity centres, and the clubs outside of lessons. A few parents and pupils would like more opportunities for sport.
- The school is rightly proud of the prominence it gives in its curriculum to pupils' personal development. It is particularly successful in teaching pupils to be rounded young citizens, aware of developments in the wider world. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development also has a high priority. For example, an inspector saw a very effective assembly in which the headteacher gave meaningful opportunities for pupils to reflect, while learning about different aspects of Advent.
- A substantial number of pupils of all ages, and including several disadvantaged pupils,

enjoy a healthy start to the school day in the breakfast club.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is good around the school and contributes to an orderly but relaxed environment. Behaviour is also good in lessons, where pupils show very positive attitudes towards learning.
- The great majority of parents and pupils regard behaviour as good.
- There have been a few incidents of verbal bullying, including occasional instances of racist name-calling. On each occasion, the school has taken appropriate action, communicating well with parents. Pupils say that these incidents are rare, as confirmed by the records, and they believe that the school deals with them quickly and fairly. This explains why pupils feel safe and confident in the staff's ability to look after them well.
- Pupils treat each other well and are friendly and helpful towards visitors.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is now just above the national average. Most pupils have a good record of attendance. A small number, including some disadvantaged pupils, fall below this level, but the vast majority of parents appreciate the importance of their children attending school regularly and punctually.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because, since the previous inspection, their progress has been variable, with some underachievement. Results of the 2016 national tests showed that too few pupils made the expected, or better than expected, rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- As the result of the school's recent work, current pupils are making more rapid progress, particularly in the early years and Years 5 and 6. However, there remains some underachievement in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2.
- Despite above-average results in the most recent Year 1 phonics check, some pupils lower down the school still have limited strategies for reading and understanding less familiar words.
- Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is also inconsistent, with younger pupils being set tasks that fail to stretch them. The pupils themselves say that they sometimes find lessons too easy.
- Some of the most able pupils have not made the progress they should by the end of Year 6 because they did not make up for underachievement lower down the school. However, some of the highest attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 currently produce very good work.
- Some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities underachieve, although their progress is improving as a result of the school putting a stronger focus on supporting them.
- Disadvantaged pupils as a whole are not yet progressing at the rates that should be expected. However, the few most able disadvantaged pupils have made good progress

as a consequence of the support they receive.

- Middle-attaining pupils sometimes underachieve because of insufficient challenge, and the school recognises this as an area for improvement.
- A notable development since the new curriculum was introduced is that older pupils do good work across a range of subjects. For example, pupils show a mature level of knowledge and understanding in history when studying topics such as the two world wars.

Early years provision

Good

- Early years provision has improved since the previous inspection. Children now make good progress. The proportion who reach a good level of development is above the national average. Therefore, children of all levels of ability, including the most able and disadvantaged children, are prepared well for their entry into Year 1.
- Parents are particularly complimentary about the provision in Reception. A typical comment to inspectors was, 'My child loves coming to school each day.'
- Many children speak clearly and confidently, including to visitors. For example, children in Reception were able to sing nursery rhymes to an inspector. Children make good progress in developing emerging writing and counting skills.
- Children settle quickly into school routines. They know what is expected of them, for example when working and playing together and when listening and responding to staff. As a result, there is a calm but purposeful learning environment which children enjoy and in which they feel very safe. They also behave well and clearly love coming to school.
- Teachers and other staff have high expectations of what the children can do. When children are working on their own or in small groups, staff stimulate their learning, for example through good questioning techniques.
- Staff assess children's progress well. They record each child's progress in detail, and make the results easily available to parents.
- Leadership of the early years is good. It ensures that the Reception children are catered for well both in terms of skills development and personal development. Leaders also make sure that staff get good opportunities to develop their own skills further.
- There are good links with parents, who are welcomed into school.
- The learning environment in Reception is bright and cheerful. There is a good range of learning resources both inside the classroom and outside. However, school leaders recognise that staff could use the outdoor learning environment even more effectively to augment the very good teaching and learning going on indoors, and that this would further enhance children's learning experiences.

School details

Unique reference number	113119
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10019949

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Lane and Gail Young
Headteacher	Annabelle Grose
Telephone number	01884 33473
Website	www.willowbank.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@willowbank.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- Children in Reception attend full time.
- The school operates a breakfast club.

- The headteacher has been in post for just under one year. Since the previous inspection there have been several changes in staffing and staff responsibilities, both among classroom teachers and the senior leadership team.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in several lessons, for both shorter and longer periods. They carried out several of the observations jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors heard pupils reading. They also looked extensively at pupils' work from all year groups.
- Inspectors held meetings with teachers, other staff and with pupils. They talked with a few parents before school. The lead inspector met three governors and also held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including the school improvement plan, the school's evaluation of its own performance, assessment data on pupils' current progress and minutes of governing body meetings. They looked at documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors analysed 50 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View). They also looked at the school's own survey of parents' views. The lead inspector received a large number of comments from parents. Inspectors considered the online staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

John Laver, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lizzy Meadows	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Miller	Ofsted Inspector

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