



The Willink School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110048
LEA West Berkshire LEA
Inspection number 278359
Inspection dates 19 October 2005 to 20 October 2005
Reporting inspector Scott Harrison HMI

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

Type of school	Other secondary	School address	School Lane
School category	Community		Burghfield Common
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Reading, Berkshire RG7 3XJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01189832030
Number on roll	927	Fax number	01189832091
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Rosemary Sanders-Rose
Date of previous inspection	13 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs B Wynn

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three contracted inspectors.

Description of the school

The Willink is an 11-18 comprehensive school, a Language College since 1996, serving a semi-rural area of West Berkshire. The school has grown steadily since the last inspection, and the sixth form has expanded in numbers and the range of courses offered. The proportion of pupils in the school eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Only a few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The school has an average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, and relatively few have statements of special educational need (SEN). The school's mission statement emphasises its commitment to a 'purposeful, caring and disciplined environment', enabling young people to realise their 'personal and academic potential'. The school also seeks to develop an international ethos through its curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's leadership team judges the effectiveness of the school to be good. Inspectors agree. The school has many good and some outstanding features. It provides very good value for money. The very great majority of parents agree that the school is doing a good job and its reputation is well deserved. Pupils' achievement is good; they do better than might be expected, given their starting points. They achieve well because they are happy and secure at school and are part of a caring and supportive community where they are expected to make an effort, work hard and behave well. Most pupils achieve this expectation. The many opportunities the school provides help pupils to develop into mature and responsible young people who relate well to others and play their part in the school community. The school seeks pupils' views about how to improve the school and this increases their sense of belonging and enjoyment. Achievement is good because much of the teaching is good and some is outstanding. Constructive relationships between teachers and pupils and the way most teachers guide and support pupils in the classroom lead to effective learning. This is a good school because it is well led and managed. The headteacher leads the school very well. The clear direction she sets and the desire to improve further are shared by the leadership team. There is a common sense of purpose among staff and governors. This sense of purpose is achieved through clarity, consultation and training. The school's self evaluation is full and accurate. The school has improved well since the last inspection and has good capacity to continue this improvement. This is an open-minded school which works well in partnership with other schools and outside agencies for the benefit of its students, and uses its specialist language college status to reach out effectively into the community. There are some weaker features already identified by the school and part of its planning for improvement. Some teachers do not always provide timely feedback through marking so that their students are unaware of what they need to do to improve their work. The Citizenship programme in Years 7 to 9 is not fully developed. At times, teachers in the sixth form need to provide more opportunities for students to work actively and independently. In some lessons teachers' planning and the resources provided do not meet the needs of lower attaining students.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school judges the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form to be good. Inspectors agree. The standards achieved by the students have increased each year and their progress is now half a grade higher than that predicted on the basis of their achievement at Key Stage 4. Students' personal development and well-being are excellent: students are well cared for and are given good opportunities to take responsibility. Teaching is good overall and the students know clearly what levels they are working at and what they need to do to achieve more highly. The leadership of the sixth form is good.

What the school should do to improve further

The inspection agrees with the school's own priorities for development, but in particular they should focus on: * the regular marking of pupils' work to show them what they need to do to improve * consistently good planning, resources and pace of lessons to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, across the curriculum * development of National Curriculum citizenship in Key Stage 3* in sixth form lessons, to provide more opportunities for students to work actively and independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards reached by pupils are good. This confirms the school's judgements. There is a clear upward trend in test and examination results as the school has focused on teaching and learning. The school has exceeded its targets overall and continues to set realistic targets for the future. At Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is good. Most pupils make good progress, but the progress of some lower attaining pupils could be better. Although there was a dip in Key Stage 3 test results in English in 2004, the department has taken action to raise attainment and there has been a strong improvement in test results this year. Pupils' attainment and progress are good at Key Stage 4. Attainment in many subjects is significantly higher than national averages and, where a subject has been below the average, there have been notable improvements as a result of intervention. Girls' attainment is higher than that of boys, but boys' attainment at Willink is higher than that of boys nationally. In the sixth form the standards are in line with the national average and are rising. A number of higher attaining students do not enter the school's sixth form, but those who do make better progress than would be expected based on their Key Stage 4 results.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and get on well with each other and with the adults who help them. Pupils in Year 7 speak very positively of settling in quickly and easily because the teachers are kind, caring and approachable. Attendance is well above average. Pupils' behaviour is usually good: outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are evident where the teaching motivates pupils. Very little unsatisfactory behaviour was observed during the inspection, but the school acknowledges that there is some 'challenging behaviour', an issue that the school is addressing. Pupils' social and moral development is good, in part because of the considerable contribution of personal, social and health education lessons and the improved quality of tutor periods. The school council represents pupils very well and its views are both sought and considered by the school. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The school has improved the provision for assemblies, which was an issue during the previous inspection. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to reflect on moral issues during these times. Pupils' cultural development is good. The school

works hard at extending pupils knowledge of the wider world, for example through the rich programme of visits in the UK and abroad, and by inviting visitors to the school, such as dance groups. All adults in the school show a high level of commitment in promoting the health and safety of the pupils. Consequently, pupils talk confidently about the importance of living a healthy and safe lifestyle. In addition, a large number of pupils are involved in sport in the community and use the local Leisure Centre, and school meal caterers have responded to students' requests for healthy eating. Pupils make useful contributions to the community. They have campaigned to raise substantial amounts of money for local events and have responded very positively to appeals on the occasion of disasters such as the Asian Tsunami.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspectors confirm the school's view that the quality of teaching and learning is good. The majority of lessons are good and there is some outstanding teaching. Pupils learn well because they are clear on the purpose of their lessons. The questions that teachers ask are well chosen to help pupils show what they have learned, to reinforce their knowledge and understanding and to get them to think about new material. Teachers usually know the pupils well and the rapport is such that pupils enjoy their work and try hard. The work is usually well matched to the abilities of individual pupils. Teachers often make good use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to prepare and present their lessons, and pupils respond well to this, and to the opportunities they get to use ICT in lessons themselves. On occasion, teaching is not as good as this: work is insufficiently challenging and only irregular use is made of homework. Weaker teaching can be linked to more challenging behaviour. In the sixth form, some teaching gives insufficient opportunity for students to be active and independent in their learning. Teaching has benefited from the school's focus on training using the methods recommended by the Key Stage 3 Strategy, and most lessons are well planned and structured. Teachers assess pupils informally in lessons to gauge understanding and identify misconceptions. Much marking is effective in helping pupils to improve, but this is not yet consistent and the school is right to have identified it as a priority. Pupils are well prepared to meet the assessment requirements of examinations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 which broadly meets the needs and interest of pupils. The curriculum is kept under review and includes work related learning and opportunities for enterprise learning. In Key Stage 3, provision of citizenship is limited and the school needs to consider the time available for this. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is good, and includes courses that take forward the school's aims as a Language College. Use has been made of the new flexibility to provide more appropriate courses for some students, including the 'accessing potential' course for

pupils who are unlikely to do well in GCSE examinations courses. The school provides successful vocational courses at Reading College. The sixth form programme is broad and now includes General Studies to ensure breadth and balance. The school is exploring the possibility of more vocational courses, both on site courses at Key Stage 4 and Level 2 courses to make the sixth form more open to students of a wider range of attainment. There is now good access to ICT across the curriculum. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including many which sustain the school's aim to give pupils an understanding of their world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The caring ethos identified in the last report has been maintained. There is now better use of tutor time, an issue identified in the last report. All adults in the school show a high level of commitment in promoting the health and safety of pupils. Suitable systems for child protection are in place, backed by staff training. Pupils are known well and good quality documentation is kept on their personal and academic progress. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are clear and are used effectively to support pupils when they are withdrawn to develop basic literacy skills. However, this information is not always used effectively by their subject teachers when planning lessons. The school works well with parents and other agencies to promote pupils' high achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

School leaders and governors know the school well. The views of parents and students are well used to track how the school is doing and where it needs to improve. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. There is a strong desire to raise standards still further. This is a good school because the drive for improvement starts with the headteacher and permeates through the staff. The headteacher's leadership is very good: strong, purposeful, determined but also humane. This sets a positive tone for the school and enables the senior leadership team and staff generally to work well together towards common goals. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The use of information and communication technology in learning, formerly a major weakness, is now a strength. The school has good capacity to improve further. Forward planning is also a strength of the school. This successfully takes into account the views of staff, students, governors and parents. Effective planning enables the school to use its finances well. Staffing and resources to support learning are very good. The school lives within its means, manages its resources outstandingly well and provides very good value for money. Day to day management is efficient and the school runs smoothly. The school uses its extensive performance data about student achievement well, for example, to focus on subjects or age groups where improvements are needed. However, the use of data to analyse the achievement of different groups

of students - those with special needs, gifted and talented students and those from ethnic minorities - has only just started. Although some subject leaders are adept at data analysis, others still find this difficult to do well and in sufficient detail. The school invests considerable time and energy in improving the skills of staff. The excellence of its staff development arrangements is one of the reasons for the good and improving quality of the teaching and this leads to steadily improving achievement. Inexperienced staff and teachers new to the school are very well supported. In most respects the school is well managed to meet the needs of all of its students. There are good links with parents and with a wide range of outside agencies which support the school in meeting the diverse needs of students. Governors support the school well. They give generously of their time and wide-ranging expertise. They have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are able to ask challenging questions of school management in pursuit of fairness and improved quality.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for your part in your school's inspection. We believe that your views of the school are important and we found what you told us most helpful.

Your school is a good one and you clearly enjoy being there. We liked the way your school wants to find out your opinions about what it is doing and what it might do in future. We also liked the atmosphere in the school. You achieve well and you have told us you feel safe in school. Your attitude to your work is positive and your behaviour is usually good. You have good teachers and you have a wide choice of subjects on offer. We think that those of you in the sixth form are good role models for pupils in other years. We feel that the school is distinctive in having an international dimension, and that you respond well to the opportunities that this brings.

Your school is striving to be even better and we believe you can play a big part in this. We have seen that some of you sometimes find your work difficult. We would like you to work closely with your teachers to make sure you know exactly what you need to do in order to learn better, for example by getting a clear explanation of anything you have done wrong or misunderstood. This means that you 'take charge' of your own learning. We also saw a few sixth form lessons where the teachers seemed to be doing all of the work: part of the satisfaction of working in smaller and more specialised groups in the sixth form should arise from participation and more independent learning, so you need to do more. In conclusion, you are part of a good school and we are confident that you will want to make it even better. We have offered ways in which we believe you can help the school achieve this. We wish you every success.

Yours sincerely

Scott Harrison HMI