



# The Willows School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 102460  
**Local Authority** Hillingdon  
**Inspection number** 286383  
**Inspection date** 18 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Judith Charlesworth

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Stipularis Drive off Glencoe Road Hayes UB4 9QB
<b>School category</b>	Community special	<b>Telephone number</b>	02088417176
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11	<b>Fax number</b>	02088424443
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jim Edgecombe
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	26	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Charlie Taylor
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body		
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 January 2002		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
3–11	18 October 2006	286383

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The Willows caters for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Each has additional needs identified on their statement of special educational needs such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autistic spectrum disorder, and very challenging behaviour. All find learning very difficult and attainment on entry is below average. In addition, the school provides a short term intervention programme (First Steps) for up to eight children aged 3 - 5 who do not have statements. There are currently six in this programme. These children are admitted for a minimum of two terms and move into mainstream school at statutory school age. Most pupils and children are White British, and over half live in lone parent families. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have both been in post for under a year and are new to the school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The Willows is an outstanding school. It successfully combines nurturing and cherishing its pupils with academic challenge. As a result, pupils' achievement and personal development are outstanding. Provision in First Steps is equally good. The school was judged to be a good school with excellent features at its last inspection and many of its robust systems and practices were still in place when the leadership changed this year. Nevertheless, the new head teacher has a very clear vision for school improvement. Together with his deputy and staff he has introduced significant change to focus more closely on supporting pupils' personal development and academic achievement, and on equipping them more effectively for re-integration into mainstream school. Three pupils went back to mainstream schools in 2005-6.

The school gives excellent support to parents, and works particularly closely with them in First Steps. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, demonstrated in the high number of questionnaires returned. One parent wrote: 'My son has made remarkable progress in his self-confidence and emotions regarding school. He is now a willing happy child going to school.'

The Willows works on the principle that pupils achieve best if they feel safe, secure and settled, and if they develop the skills needed to manage their own behaviour and learning. The school has recently extended the range of professionals and therapists who work in school to support pupils' varying needs. A "chill-out room" full of enticing resources for creative and imaginative play has just been furnished for therapists' use, and a display of pupils' positive comments show how much they enjoy this facility. First Steps and the class for the youngest pupils in the school are set up as nurture groups. In these, the relationships between adults are explicitly supportive and considerate. The great emphasis on language development is very evident in the sharing of food in a formal breakfast that also gives excellent opportunities for social learning. Many of these principles extend to the other three classes and are reinforced by the strong personal, social, and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, make healthy choices and become responsible young citizens. Most of them achieve these aspects well.

Alongside this provision is an equally strong focus on promoting pupils' academic progress. This is underpinned by very effective, newly introduced systems for assessment, planning intervention and support for improvement, and measuring progress. Data analysis shows that pupils and children make excellent progress from a very low baseline. The academic standards reached are below average, but pupils often make better than average progress, particularly in mathematics and science. Some reach broadly average levels of attainment by the time they leave. More limited progress in English has been very successfully addressed by a new curriculum and teaching approach for literacy. Test results show pupils' skills are improving rapidly. Other curriculum developments are in hand as the school moves further into the theme-based curriculum that staff know pupils particularly enjoy. Nevertheless, pupils' enjoyment of lessons is already very evident in good attendance, the enthusiasm most have for their work, and the calm, considerate atmosphere that often prevails.

Underpinning this is the outstanding quality of teaching, based on excellent relationships, staff team work, good curriculum content and planning, and highly effective monitoring by the leadership team.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

The school has no major issues for improvement. The schools' self identified plan is appropriate:

- To develop the topic-based curriculum and associated skills-based assessment as its next step.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' attainment on entry to both the school and First Steps is generally well below average. Approximately one quarter are admitted without any information on their rate of progress over previous years, and the progress of those for whom information is available tends to be very slow. The school's excellent provision helps pupils to become open to learning. Records show that they make up much of their lost time. Although few reach standards expected of their age, many show aptitudes in particular subjects such as art. Typically, pupils' rate of progress improves as their behavioural and emotional difficulties subside, and this is often tied to improvement in literacy skills. Some pupils re-enter mainstream school as they develop the disposition and skills to learn effectively and all children attending First Steps move into mainstream education. Pupils make very good progress towards the targets set for them on their individual education plans (IEPs). Whether progress is made in small steps or measured against national benchmarks, it represents excellent achievement.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The social, behavioural and emotional difficulties that pupils arrive with diminish as their security, confidence, self-esteem and academic achievement grow. Their prospects for future learning and economic well-being are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding and their cultural development is good. Pupils learn to manage their behaviour much more successfully, and often have real insight into what provokes them, how they are feeling and how they might react. They understand right and wrong, and how this translates into the way they act. Pupils respond extremely well to the many opportunities given to develop appropriate social behaviour. They enjoy the family-like social situations and the responsibilities for decision making held by the school council. Pupils understand and generally abide by the school's three simple rules, which include being kind, polite and respectful, and also the school's non-denominational prayer which promotes love and concern for one another and human-kind. Pupils therefore become well prepared for taking their place in and making a positive contribution to society. Behaviour is good. Although there are

occasional outbursts, pupils' relationships with one another are generally good, and those with adults are excellent.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching is outstanding because it brings together a number of factors. The team work between staff members is exceptionally strong, and pupils are supported to take part and learn by sensitive but firm interactions. Staff take on the challenges pupils present in a very positive way. They adapt tasks, lesson plans and curriculum content to suit pupils' immediate needs, but participation for learning is central. If pupils opt out they must make up for lost learning time. Behaviour is expertly managed by the staff through their strong relationships with pupils, positive reinforcement and intensive support when necessary. A soothing hand on a shoulder is often enough to keep a pupil calm and reassured. Learning is good as a result of this high quality teaching, although it is inevitably affected at times by pupils' personal difficulties. The leadership's current focus on meeting individuals' learning styles through varied teaching strategies has helped improve teaching to its current high level. Lessons are different in style, for example ranging from the quiet calm of painting to music, to enthusiastic spelling tests, to reading out loud taking on the voice of a character in the text.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and very well resourced. It is long established, and planning and associated record keeping of pupils' progress goes back many years. The curriculum covers all subjects of the National Curriculum, with appropriate emphasis on literacy, numeracy and PSHE. Planning is thorough and designed to systematically build up pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Despite these strengths, however, the leadership team have begun to implement positive changes to promote achievement further. An increased emphasis has been given to supporting pupils' personal and social development, for example in the tea and toast sessions and the SEAL curriculum (social, emotional aspects of learning). The curriculum for the younger pupils is presented through the nurture group context, and opportunities for play - therapeutic, social and everyday - are increasingly given. A new, more effective curriculum for teaching literacy has been introduced. The leadership team is currently working out a topic-based approach to the curriculum, with a particular focus on pupils' participation and enjoyment, and equipping them with the skills they need for future learning. The move towards this creative approach is already evident, for example in pupils' excellent art work to illustrate aspects of literacy and history.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

This outstanding area of the school's work is central to pupils' achievement. The care, guidance and support given to pupils are excellent. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Risk assessments are completed and procedures to ensure child protection and the health and safety of pupils are well attended to. Checks on the suitability of staff are thorough although they have not yet been compiled into the single central record in the correct format. The guidance given to pupils is outstanding. Staff are excellent role models. They give praise and sanctions consistently according to the school's policies, and they support pupils at the right level to achieve. IEPs reflect pupils' personal needs effectively, and the behaviour targets set for individuals are specific, relevant and well understood by the pupils. Excellent support is given to the pupils themselves, for example in times of distress, or when showing the headteacher good work, and through the appointment of supporting professionals. The school works in close liaison with parents, fully recognising that a joint approach with home to pupils' education and welfare is the most effective.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The leadership and management of the school are excellent and are focused firmly on promoting pupils' achievement and personal development so that they are better equipped to deal with life outside The Willows, as children and as future adults. Highly effective school evaluation resulted in the identification of a number of areas for improvement to bring the school more in line with current practice. Amongst these was the need to streamline some of the school's systems to support the staff's work-life balance. For this reason, the pace of change has been carefully structured but many improvements have already been implemented and have had a positive effect. Examples of these are the introduction of the nurture groups and a more effective way of tracking academic progress. Very good, staged plans have been laid for further improvement, such as moving to a topic-based curriculum that supports the development of transferable skills for learning. Performance is carefully and thoughtfully monitored; analysis of pupils' performance resulted in the new literacy curriculum, and lesson observations for staff performance management have differing foci at different times in the year and are shared throughout the teaching staff. Governance is good and meets statutory requirements although it tends to support rather than lead strategic developments. Financial and human resources have been very well deployed to the benefit of all pupils. The school's capacity for further improvement is excellent.





## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for letting me come into your lessons when I visited your school earlier this week to see how it was working and how well you were all doing. I was very pleased with what I found. The staff think that The Willows is a good school, but I think it is better than that. I think it's excellent. Most of your parents do too.

I think that the staff work very hard indeed to help you stay safe and healthy, enjoy your work and prepare you for your next schools. The teaching is excellent and you make very good progress as a result. I was so impressed by how well you took part in your lessons, how well your reading and spelling is coming on, and how friendly you can be to one another, although some of you do forget occasionally. I have never before sat with a class group in a school such as yours sharing tea and toast and such pleasant conversation. Well done to you all. That was just one of the interesting things the staff give you to do each day. I also enjoyed the lively literacy lessons I watched, and the art lesson in Ash class where you painted to the music from Edward Scissorhands. One of you said that the music reminded you of snow. Did you know that the film ends with a snow scene, and that the snow was made from Edward carving out ice statues with his scissor hands? Perhaps your teachers can show you that part of the film. I enjoyed meeting some of the parents of the children in First Steps as they attended the coffee morning to learn about what their children do during the day.

The headteacher and staff look after you and run your school very well indeed. They are always looking for ways to help you learn more, and to overcome your various difficulties. They are very successful in this and have lots more plans to make school even better. I have suggested that they concentrate on developing topic work, which you particularly enjoy, and on the way they will record your progress.

In all I think you are very fortunate to attend The Willows school and First Steps Nursery, and I wish you all the best for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth

Lead Inspector