

Willowfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103100
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	286557
Inspection date	6 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Gill Close HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	588
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Maureen Chadwick
Headteacher	Ms Eve Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001
School address	Clifton Avenue Walthamstow London E17 6HL
Telephone number	020 8527 4065
Fax number	020 8523 4939

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Willowfield is a smaller than average school, with more boys than girls. Three quarters of the students come from a range of minority ethnic groups, the largest of which has Pakistani heritage. One half of the students speak English as an additional language; a small number are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is three times the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is twice the national average. Attainment on entry is below average and rising. Willowfield is a Training School and the lead school in a Leading Edge Partnership. It became a humanities specialist school in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Willowfield is a good school in which parents rightly have great confidence. Students make good progress because they benefit from a combination of good teaching, support and management of resources. The school has secured a range of funding that it uses well to support students when they need it and to extend opportunities for all. Consequently, students with learning difficulties or disabilities, and those at early stages of learning English, do as well as other students. From starting points below average, students' achievement is good although they attain standards that are below average overall. The school is particularly successful in supporting low attainers to pass five subjects, including English and mathematics, at GCSE. Its inclusive ethos is further demonstrated by the good pastoral care which secures students' good personal development and well-being and creates a community in which everyone celebrates its diversity and respects each other. Students' multicultural development is outstanding. They make an excellent contribution to helping others in the school community and beyond. For example, through the school's humanities specialist status, they contribute effectively to literacy and citizenship activities in partner primary and secondary schools. Students enjoy school and have excellent attendance. In this small school, staff know all students well and provide a wide range of good support for their personal and academic needs, and to ensure that they stay safe. They use data effectively to identify and support students who may be falling behind but recognise that ways of evaluating the progress of individuals and groups that are not making good progress could be more efficient.

The broad and balanced curriculum meets students' needs well. Teaching is good in most lessons but there are some others in which it does not provide enough challenge for all students to enable them to make good progress. Staff work well together to raise the quality of teaching, which has improved since the last inspection. However, there is room for a sharper focus on students' progress in lesson observations to raise teaching quality to consistently good.

Leadership and management are good. Staff work together well with a clear vision for students' success. The improvements the school has made since the last inspection, for example in teaching and middle management, demonstrate its good capacity to continue to improve. It judges its own effectiveness accurately but its development planning does not support incremental improvement as well as it could. There is not a sharp enough focus on priorities or clear enough expression of success criteria in terms of impact.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen priorities in development planning, with success criteria based more clearly on impact.
- Increase the impact of lesson observations on raising teaching to consistently good through a closer focus on the monitoring of all students' progress.
- Use assessment more effectively to indicate as soon as possible where individuals or groups are not making good progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students make good progress throughout the school. It is particularly good in English and mathematics, and for those students with learning difficulties or disabilities who receive extra support. Students at an early stage of learning English receive good support which quickly

gives them access to all subjects and enables them to do well. There are no underachieving groups.

Students attain standards that are below average overall but nevertheless meet the school's targets. The school's success in supporting low attainers is demonstrated by the above average percentage of students passing at least five subjects at GCSE and every student in Year 11 passing English GCSE in 2006.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is a happy, safe community in which students celebrate their diversity and get on very well with each other and with staff. They develop an excellent understanding of different cultures. Some students have taken the initiative to set up the Unity group that is making a significant contribution to enhancing community cohesion within and beyond the school. There is a strong sense of mutual respect and many students make an excellent contribution to helping others in the school or in partner schools. They play an important part in making suggestions and researching how the school can improve. Students enjoy coming to school. The extensive range of rewards and procedures has improved attendance this year to further above average. The majority of students behave well but sometimes low level disturbance interrupts the flow of lessons or there is some misbehaviour outside lessons. Students feel very safe and know that the rare occurrences of bullying are dealt with well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They understand how to stay healthy. Some eat very healthily and opt for extra-curricular sporting activities but they do not all spend the recommended time on physical education. Students' good progress in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and in developing their self-confidence, prepares them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students make good progress because of the combination of good teaching and support they receive both in and out of lessons. Students find the teachers very helpful and welcome the range of opportunities for assistance with homework and revision, as well as the special support available if they are having difficulty in meeting their targets. Good use of resources enables students with learning difficulties or disabilities, or at early stages of learning English, to receive particularly strong support from well-trained staff.

In most lessons, teaching and learning are good. Students really enjoy the good relationships and interesting activities which help them to do well. They are clear about what they are learning in these lessons and about how to improve. There are some good examples of students making assessments of their own or each others' work. Nevertheless, there is a substantial minority of lessons in which teaching is satisfactory, and a very few in which it is inadequate. In these lessons, students spend too much time listening or on work which does not match their needs well enough or engage their interest, so they are not given enough challenge to enable them to make good progress. In some lessons where students have had temporary teachers they have not made good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum meets students' needs well. It ensures that they develop the core literacy and numeracy skills they need in the future. For example, in 2006 all Year 11 students were entered for GCSE in English language, English literature, mathematics and double science and there were very high pass rates. It provides a good range of vocational options for all students. There is good preparation for the future through the careers education programme, work experience and special events such as citizenship week in which students work together in teams. There is a good range of enrichment opportunities that students enjoy, including visits and extra-curricular clubs as well as extension activities for gifted and talented students. For students with learning difficulties or disabilities, and for those who are at early stages of learning English, there is good provision of support within and outside lessons, including a homework club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring and inclusive school in which its small size enables staff to know all students well. Through a wide variety of support they ensure that no student's difficulties slip through the net. There are good systems to support transition, including work in primary schools. Students at risk are identified early and given good support, such as through a learning mentor or, if their behaviour is impeding their learning, in the inclusion centre. Funding is used well to target support where it is needed, for example for students with learning difficulties or disabilities and for students of Black or mixed ethnic heritage who are at risk of underachieving. There are robust systems for ensuring that students' well-being is safeguarded and that health and safety requirements are met. The school works extremely well with agencies and partner schools to enhance students' well-being.

Staff use data effectively to identify students who may be falling behind and take measures to help them catch up. The newly developing roles of student progress leaders and paired form tutors are providing improving support for academic development, informed by the performance data. Nevertheless, the data do not convey as clearly as they might the progress students are making each year against consistent targets, for example to help staff identify where progress in line with expectations might be improved to good. The school recognises that there is room for greater efficiency and consistency in the way that progress of individual students and groups can be highlighted in the data, enabling any less than good progress or improvements to be identified readily.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Strong leadership sets a clear vision for all students to succeed, which is shared by the staff who collaborate with each other very productively to achieve it. The school has bid successfully for funding and taken initiatives to help it deliver its vision. As a Training School, its focus on learning has involved staff effectively in working together to enhance their professional development and improve the quality of teaching, for example through coaching. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. However, there is room for a sharper focus

on students' progress in lesson observations and a closer link from them to a process of incremental improvement in order to raise teaching quality to consistently good.

The school has found a variety of ways to manage ongoing difficulties in filling some posts and has structured and developed management so that it is effective across the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Middle managers are involved well in evaluation and planning. The school builds well on views of parents, students and staff in its evaluations, and is developing improved ways of involving students. It has identified accurately its overall effectiveness and its key strengths and areas for development. Nonetheless, its development plans are not well enough focused on a small number of priorities or expressed in terms of impact to support gradual and measurable improvement.

There is now a full complement of governors after a period of vacancies, and new ones are developing their roles. Governors support the school effectively but there are a few statutory requirements that are not fully in place.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

18 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Willowfield School, London, E17 6HL

Thank you for telling me about your school when I visited recently. I found that it is a good school. You make good progress. The school is a happy and safe place where you all get on well together and celebrate your diverse community. The way you help out each other, and in other schools, is excellent. You enjoy school and have exceptionally high attendance but sometimes some of you disturb others in lessons or elsewhere. You know how to stay healthy but do not all have the recommended time for physical education.

The range of subjects in the curriculum is good and helps you to pass at least five subjects at GCSE including English and mathematics. You find the help you receive from teachers and support staff very useful. I found that it is good, especially for those of you that need any extra assistance. The staff know you well and provide good care. Your teachers use information about your performance to help you meet your targets; it could be improved to help you all make even better progress. Most teaching is good but sometimes lessons do not provide you all with enough challenging work so you do not make good progress.

The school is well led. The staff work together well and know how good the school is but I have asked them to do the following things to help it improve further:

- check your progress in lessons more closely so they can improve all teaching to good
- use assessment information more effectively to help you all make good progress
- focus the school's plans on steps towards meeting its priorities.

I wish you success at school and in helping the school to improve.

Best wishes

Gill Close HMI