



Willows Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106294
Local Authority Trafford
Inspection number 287471
Inspection dates 29–30 November 2006
Reporting inspector Frank Carruthers

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Victoria Road
School category	Community		Timperley, Altrincham
Age range of pupils	3–11		Cheshire WA15 6PP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 9807685
Number on roll (school)	256	Fax number	0161 9125607
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr David Preston
		Headteacher	Mrs H Foster
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 29–30 November 2006	Inspection number 287471
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This above average sized primary school serves a suburb of Altrincham. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has the Basic Skills, Healthy Schools and the bronze Eco-Schools Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well and make good strides in both their personal and their academic development. Right from the start the children show enthusiasm for school and learn quickly. In the Foundation Stage they achieve well thanks to the good teaching in the purpose-built Foundation Stage unit. By the time the pupils are ready to move on to secondary school they have made good progress and are reaching above average standards in English, mathematics and science. In some years, results have been significantly above average. Pupils acquire good skills of teamwork, responsibility and commitment. This is evident for instance in the very high levels of attendance and punctuality. Pupils' personal development is good and they have a good awareness of personal safety and how to lead a fit and healthy lifestyle. The great majority behave well and are outstanding in the way they take on responsible roles in school. A minority of pupils in one class, however, are disruptive in lessons and though staff are taking steps to improve the behaviour, these measures are yet to have a full impact.

All aspects of the school's provision are good with outstanding features. There are, for instance, examples of outstanding teaching and learning, the curriculum is enhanced exceptionally well by themed weeks (called 'Buzz Weeks') and by visits and visitors to school, and the school promotes excellent links with a local special school that have tremendous social benefits for pupils of both schools. Staff have begun to develop links between subjects to enhance the pupils' enjoyment of what they learn and there is more to be done in this respect.

Leadership and management of the school are good overall. Outstanding features include the leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and the work of the governing body: all strive successfully for the best interests of the school. Procedures to evaluate the work of the school are good. Management by subject leaders is good but some elements of their work are not fully embedded. Thanks to the total commitment of the headteacher to the success of the school over a sustained period of time she inspires governors to support her in maintaining the quality and standards reported at the last inspection. Because of this the leadership team and governing body have good capacity to maintain improvement. The school uses its limited resources well to give good value for money and there are comprehensive plans to improve the buildings, its fabric and the internal accommodation in 2007.

What the school should do to improve further

- Eliminate the disruptive behaviour of a minority of pupils that is adversely affecting learning in one class.
- Develop links between subjects to promote the pupils' understanding and enjoyment of their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's attainment on entry to Nursery is above expectation. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and most reach the goals expected of children by the end of the Reception year or are working beyond them. Pupils continue to achieve well in Key Stage 1 and assessment results were above average at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics in 2006. Results have been significantly above average in most years recently. Girls' performance is better than boys' and this is in line with the national trend.

Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 2, and in test results in 2006 for pupils in Year 6 almost all achieved the expected Level 4 or better in English, mathematics and science. The majority reached the higher Level 5 in all three subjects. This was a significant improvement on the previous year's results and came about because of the focus given to challenging pupils to achieve even better than had been predicted from earlier assessments. There is now no significant difference between boys' and girls' performance because of the good focus given to pupils who are likely to underachieve. The school exceeded its targets for the age group. The few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are learning English as an additional language achieve well. As a result all pupils are equipped with skills in literacy and numeracy that are at least good when they move on to secondary education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school and parents agree that their children have very positive attitudes to their work. Outstanding elements of the pupils' personal development include their enjoyment of and enthusiasm for school and their consistently high levels of attendance and punctuality, which are features that help their academic and personal well-being in the future. One child commented, 'We do exciting things in school and that makes our lessons fun.'

Behaviour in almost all lessons is good and there are exceptional examples of pupils behaving responsibly around school. However, the disruptive behaviour of a minority of pupils adversely affects the learning in one class. There are many roles that older pupils take on to support the work of the school and to help younger children, for example play leaders, librarians, and junior 'staff' in the school office, and in the lessons in physical exercise Year 6 pupils help to teach weekly to Key Stage 1 pupils.

Pupils have a good awareness of personal safety and a healthy and fit lifestyle and develop good skills of teamwork and self-confidence, attributes which stand them in good stead for the future. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their social and moral development is strengthened particularly well by the opportunities they have to take part in decision making, for example as members of the school council and the eco-school council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. In the outstanding lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils learn exceptionally well in a purposeful working environment. Key strengths of the good and outstanding lessons include teachers' good subject knowledge, which they use well to challenge pupils, and the way the staff encourage pupils' independence. The support from teaching assistants is very effective, especially for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The assessment of pupils' progress is rigorous and covers a range of subjects in addition to English, mathematics and science. The staff use the information well to help them plan lessons. Lesson objectives are shared with the pupils in all lessons and the pupils have a good understanding of their targets. Revised systems of setting regular homework and marking pupils' work, in order to promote understanding of what to do next, have been introduced and are having a good impact on how pupils assess their own rate of progress.

On the few occasions when pupils' learning is satisfactory rather than good lessons are directed too much by the teacher or there is an imbalance of time between teachers' introductions to a lesson and the time that pupils have to work on their own tasks.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with outstanding features and meets the needs of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a strong and valuable emphasis on promoting skills of literacy and numeracy. The school considers the curriculum to be outstanding but inspectors find that there are one or two elements that are in the process of development rather than fully embedded. Information and communication technology is satisfactory overall but its scope is somewhat limited because the computer room is small, reducing access for pupils, and there have been hardware problems. However, the school is doing its best to overcome these problems. There are interactive whiteboards in classrooms in Key Stages 1 and 2 and good plans to improve the infrastructure. Staff have made a good start in linking subjects together to enhance the pupils' enjoyment of learning but there is more for them to do.

Good use is made of the outdoor environment in order to enliven the curriculum. In lessons of personal, social, health and citizenship education there is a strong emphasis on pupils learning about becoming good citizens and leading a healthy lifestyle. Some of the enhanced provision is excellent, for example 'Buzz Weeks' which really excite the pupils. There is a good range of visitors to school and visits out of school and French is taught in Key Stage 2 by class teachers and a visiting specialist from the associated high school. The breakfast and after-school clubs are well supported and

much appreciated by parents. Extra-curricular activities include such unusual activities as golf and lacrosse, which promote pupils' fitness and health and are proving popular.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are guided and supported well and relationships between adults and pupils are based on genuine respect and care. Pupils trust staff and staff know them well; as a result, pupils say they feel safe in school. Procedures for child protection, safe recruitment of staff and health and safety are in place. The behaviour policy is effective in promoting the good behaviour of the great majority though not all pupils. A minority in one class are not responding well enough to its rewards and sanctions. An outstanding element of the pastoral care provided for pupils is the emphasis on reaching out and including all pupils in what the school offers. For example, there are exceptional links with a local special school that mean pupils get to know one another and enjoy regular visits and events together. Links with outside agencies ensure that there is appropriate support for those pupils who require it, and good partnerships with the associated high school benefit the transition of pupils between Years 6 and 7. Parents and carers report that they feel very welcome in school and are encouraged through meetings and workshops to be involved in their children's education. There are effective strategies for monitoring pupils' academic progress so that talents and potential or any underachievement are identified.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school benefit from the outstanding leadership qualities of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who provide the school with its drive to improve standards and never to stand still. A key feature is the emphasis given by the leadership team in their commitment to ensuring that everyone has the best of educational opportunities, for example by monitoring the quality of teaching and standards across the school and acting on findings. School self-evaluation is good. It has led, for instance, to a significant increase in the numbers of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. Not all of the school's views match the judgements of the inspection, however. Inspectors found pupils' personal development and well-being, the curriculum, and care, guidance and support to be good with outstanding features rather than the school's view of outstanding.

Management by subject leaders is good though some elements of their work, such as linking their planning together, are in the process of development rather than fully embedded. They are well involved in rigorous procedures to monitor and evaluate provision and standards. The views of pupils and parents are taken into account and the school acts on them, for instance in providing more after-school clubs. Parents hold the school in high regard and very few have concerns. A typical comment is, 'I liked the atmosphere and ambience as soon as I walked in.'

The governing body fulfils its roles exceptionally well. Leadership by the chairperson and several key governors is excellent. For example, they have high levels of professional expertise to bring to their roles, scrutinise information about the school's performance and hold the school to very close account.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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	2
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	2
The attendance of learners	1
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	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.

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	1
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	1
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 very much for your help when we inspected your school. Please pass on our thanks to the other pupils we met and spoke to while we were with you. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now we want to share with you what we thought about your school.

Your school is giving you a good standard of education. This means that you are doing well in school subjects and there are many things that the staff do well for you.

These are some of the things that are good:

- staff take good care of you all, helping you to be fit, safe and healthy
- you are achieving well in subjects such as English, mathematics and science
- many of you have responsible roles in school and you carry them out exceptionally well, for example the school council itself, the play leaders and the 'Fit Bods' enthusiasts (we were very impressed!)
- the school has an excellent link with Pictor School and that has great benefits for you and the pupils from Pictor
- your headteacher and deputy headteacher are outstanding (but you don't need me to tell you that, do you!).

Congratulations. You have much to be proud of!

So that you all learn well, we have asked the staff to stop any examples of bad behaviour among pupils getting in the way of learning. To help you enjoy your lessons even more, we want the staff to make clear links between subjects, for instance history, English, art and ICT.

So your part in this is to make sure you all behave as well as the best do and enjoy your lessons.