



# Willow Bank Infant School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 109889  
**Local Authority** Wokingham District Council  
**Inspection number** 288524  
**Inspection dates** 11–12 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jill Arnold HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant	<b>School address</b>	Duffield Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Woodley
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7		Reading RG5 4RW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01189 695452
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	141	<b>Fax number</b>	01189 014700
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Juliet Sherratt
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Andrea Stephens
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 May 2002		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This is a small school located in a residential area on the outskirts of Reading. Children usually start school at the beginning of the term in which their fifth birthday falls. Although most of the children are White British, a few have family backgrounds in Pakistan and India. The school has the Investors in People, Healthy Schools and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) national 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 with some outstanding features. The headteacher and staff work as an effective team committed to providing high quality care and education. Governance is outstanding. Children are confident, enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning. The good quality of teaching and the broad range of curricular activities enable children to achieve well and attain good standards. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is outstanding, enabling children to attain excellent skills in using and applying ICT. The quality of care, guidance and support provided to the children is outstanding.

The school has successfully tackled the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. Standards of writing have improved and are now above average. This is partly due to the increase of purposeful opportunities and inspiring experiences for children to write about and more sharply focused teaching. The monitoring role of subject co-ordinators has been developed and makes a good contribution to school improvement. Provision in the Foundation Stage of learning has improved and is now good. However, many children in Year 1 find the transition from Reception too demanding.

Although children's behaviour is generally good, there are occasions in lessons when they spend too long listening and their attention dips. They are not always given enough opportunity to evaluate their work or use their initiative. The children say that the lessons they most enjoy keep them actively involved. This was seen during the inspection when effective teaching provided good opportunities for children to apply their skills, share their ideas and work collaboratively, enabling them to make good progress.

Good leadership and management, including accurate self-evaluation and effective action planning, provide the school with a good capacity for further improvement. Although formal monitoring of teaching is infrequent, there is recognition by the school that more regular opportunities to observe lessons will support further development of expertise. There are robust procedures for tracking children's progress and setting challenging targets. These are used effectively to identify where additional support is required to ensure children make good progress. Governors undertake their roles and responsibilities efficiently and effectively. They take an active role in the life of the school and contribute to its strategic direction.

The school enjoys the support of parents and has good links with the neighbouring pre-school, other local schools and external agencies. Responses to the questionnaire that was sent out to parents before the inspection were overwhelmingly positive and appreciative of the open and caring approach of the school. One parent wrote, 'We like the caring nature of Willow Bank Infants. Every child is made to feel special'.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for children to be actively involved in their learning, to use their initiative and evaluate their work.

- Develop the curriculum to provide a more gradual transition for children moving from the Foundation Stage into Year 1.
- Implement arrangements to increase observations of teaching.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

When children start school in Reception their skills are wide ranging but most are of average ability or above. They make good progress in their learning to reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are significantly above national averages at the end of Year 2. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress.

The school's results in the national tests for Year 2 children have been relatively higher in mathematics than reading and writing for the last four years. In 2005 there was a significant upturn in reading and writing, as a result of the school's initiatives to improve in these areas. Although the provisional results for 2006 have dipped slightly, they remain above the national averages and the school's tracking data show that the children achieved well in relation to their starting points.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Children's personal development is good with some outstanding aspects. 'It's impossible to reach Year 2 without knowing that fruit and vegetables are good for you!' exclaimed one Year 2 child. This reflects children's excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise.

Children like coming to school and attendance levels are above average. They feel safe and are convinced that if they have problems with friendships or feel they are being bullied that either the duty 'buddies' or a member of staff will sort it out. They are kind and caring towards after each other and they show that they understand the difference between right and wrong. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are generally good and during the harvest celebration exemplary attitudes were displayed. When given the opportunity, children show high levels of independence, even in the Foundation Stage. A good range of activities extends the children's understanding of different cultures and faiths. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned with children's learning needs and interests in mind. Carefully phrased questions and explanations are used

effectively to extend learning. Children have positive attitudes to learning, they work productively and make good progress. Teaching assistants provide effective support for groups of children and individuals with additional learning needs.

The most effective lessons seen during the inspection provided children with good opportunities to be actively involved in their learning by sharing their ideas, and using their initiative in applying their skills. In a few lessons children spent too long listening and had too few opportunities to make decisions about their work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum and range of other activities provided by the school are good. It is planned effectively to meet the needs and interests of the children and an outstanding feature is the provision for ICT. Cross curricular work is planned very effectively which creates a meaningful context for children to learn and develop their skills. Visitors and visits also enhance provision and broaden children's experiences, learning about circus skills and farming butterflies, for instance. Additional support programmes accelerate the progress of children who are finding reading and writing difficult. The Foundation Stage curriculum provides a good range of opportunities for children to become independent and confident learners from an early age. The school recognises the need to review its Year 1 curriculum to ease the transition from Reception, as some children require a more flexible approach.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school's provision for the care, guidance and support of children is outstanding. Staff are alert to children's academic and social needs and there are strong systems in place to identify and respond to their learning needs at an early stage. The school has good links with local authority services to support children with specific needs but all with learning difficulties are supported very effectively. There are very good systems to inform children about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. Parents are very happy with the care and guidance their children receive.

The school has excellent procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of all its children. Child protection and health and safety procedures are very clear and understood by all staff. Appropriate training has been provided and staff know what actions are to be taken and by whom. Children are very clear about who they can approach if they have problems. All staff and volunteers have been checked for their suitability for working with children. Induction for children starting school in Reception is carefully planned and managed through a series of visits and meetings for children and parents. The 'family time' at the start of the day also supports children to settle into school confidently.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the school is committed to raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of the children. Accurate self-evaluation has resulted in a clearly prioritised school improvement plan. Subject leaders and coordinators monitor their areas of responsibility appropriately by reviewing teachers' planning and children's work. The school has correctly identified a need for further opportunities to observe teaching and learning to develop expertise and extend professional dialogue.

Financial planning is tightly controlled and the large surplus has been accrued for a building project to improve the accommodation and disabled access in the near future. Governance is outstanding. The governing body comprises a skilful, reflective and dedicated group of people who have an excellent understanding of the work of the school and a commitment to ensuring that it provides the children with high quality education and care. The level of support and challenge they provide makes a significant contribution to the direction of the school.

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## 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>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<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>	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	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**

We really enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for chatting to us during the inspection and for being so friendly. We particularly enjoyed seeing you perform your harvest celebration.

Willow Bank is a good school. Here are some of the special things that we found out about it:

- the teachers and teaching assistants help you to do really good work
- there are lots of interesting things for you to do
- the school is helping you to become healthy, sensible and confident young people
- your school looks after you and cares for you very well
- you also take very good care of each other
- the work that you do with computers is excellent.

Even good schools can get better. These are the things that we have asked your school to do next:

- give you more opportunities to be active in your lessons, to share your ideas and make decisions about your work
- change some things about learning in Year 1; this will help everyone to do really well when they move from Reception
- get the teachers to watch each others' lessons more; this will help them to share good ideas about teaching and make learning even better.

Yours is a good school and we know that you are proud of it. Everyone in school wants to make it even better in the future. We know that you will all help.

Good luck from the inspectors and thanks again.

Jill Arnold  
Her Majesty's Inspector