

Willowbrook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115041
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290109
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2007
Reporting inspector	John Paull

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gill Schofield
Headteacher	Mrs S E Taggart
Date of previous school inspection	29 October 2001
School address	Brookfield Close Hutton Brentwood Essex CM13 2RG
Telephone number	01277 214662
Fax number	01277 200436

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Willowbrook is an average-sized primary school with plans for completely new accommodation. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, although a small number come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A few speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils who enter or leave the school at times other than the beginning of each school year is higher than normal and can amount to around half the class by Year 6. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average overall, although the figure tends to rise in each year group as new pupils are admitted. The proportion who are currently known to be eligible for a free school meal is above average. Children's attainment when they first enter Reception ranges very widely and overall it is below average.

The school is working towards 'Healthy Schools' status and it enters the 'Brentwood in Bloom' festival each year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Willowbrook Primary is a good school. This judgement matches its own evaluation. Good leadership and management, including an exceptionally strong sense of purpose amongst all staff, are producing many improvements. Management strategies are used effectively to identify weaknesses in the school's performance and then appropriate action is taken to address them. Good overall achievement is indicated and good value for money is obtained.

Currently, standards in Year 6 are broadly average, and much improved on that indicated by the 2006 national test results, which were below average in English, mathematics and science. Indicative results for the 2007 national tests show an improvement both in numbers of pupils reaching expected levels and in those exceeding them. Children make good progress in the Reception, often from low starting points. Good quality provision, including teaching and the curriculum, ensures that most children reach expected goals and achieve well by the time they enter Year 1. In recent years, assessment results at the end of Year 2 have shown standards to be at least average and frequently above, indicating strong achievement. For example, in 2006, results were broadly average but above average in writing. Standards this year at Year 2 are a little below average because learning has been affected by staffing difficulties. Good management on the part of the headteacher means that decisions have already been made to ensure that these pupils can make up lost ground when in Year 3. After Year 2, pupil mobility is often high. Frequently by Year 6 as many as half the year group has not begun school at Willowbrook and so have not benefited from its early provision. Nevertheless, achievement remains good. Records indicate that older pupils who attend the school for two years or more achieve well in that time, although writing and aspects of mathematics are weaker areas. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, do well in relation to their individualised targets.

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils know right from wrong and behave well. Because of planned building works, much renovation has understandably been halted because it would be wasteful under the circumstances. Nevertheless, pupils take care of their surroundings and respect the good work on display. They are very proud of the attractively kept grounds, to which they make a strong contribution through their gardening clubs. They often win awards from the 'Brentwood in Bloom' event. Pupils enjoy school, which is reflected in good attendance. They know much about how to keep safe and healthy. Satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills and good use of information and communication technology (ICT) mean that preparation for life beyond school is sound.

Good teaching and learning, based on a well planned curriculum, are monitored effectively by subject leaders. These aspects have contributed significantly to recent improvement. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Nevertheless, aspects of personal care are good, including statutorily required elements. Good procedures for tracking and assessing progress have been introduced. However, these initiatives are recent and are not yet realising their full impact on pupils' individual learning and progress over time.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain its focus on improving standards in writing and mathematics by Year 6.
- As information derived from assessment records and the tracking of progress becomes more extensive, use it even more effectively to address pupils' individual needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From often low starting points, whether on entry to Reception or when pupils join at an older age, progress is good. This results in good achievement for all groups, including pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Standards are currently average at the top of the school, which compares favourably with the school's results in the 2006 national tests which were below average in English, mathematics and science. Early indications in the 2007 tests in Year 6 reflect the now broadly average standards, with several pupils achieving very well and exceeding their expected target. Standards are also rising in younger age groups where improvements in provision have already begun to take effect. Challenging targets for different groups have been set and pupils are increasingly achieving these well. This pattern is repeated amongst more able pupils, whose success in exceeding normally expected levels is better now than a few years ago. While the 2006 assessments in Year 2 were average, the current Year 2 class is not achieving as well as predicted, because earlier staffing difficulties caused a lack of continuity in pupils' learning. Standards here are a little below average. Reception children settle well and make good progress. A good proportion reach expected goals and children's achievement is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, is good. They are proud of what they do and aware of the beliefs and traditions of people from different backgrounds. Teachers use their many experiences positively, an example of this is the recent work undertaken on Hinduism. Pupils' attendance is above the national average and they say how much they enjoy coming to school. Behaviour is consistently good. Pupils are courteous and considerate towards each other and adults. They know how to stay safe, while their understanding of what they should eat to be healthy is good. If they feel upset or worried, they are confident that one of the adults in school will help them. Some classes have a 'suggestion box' and use this to make their ideas known. Pupils have a good sense of responsibility and contribute to the local community by raising funds. Pupils of all ages are keen to be helpful and to take on responsibilities. Members of the school council are proud to represent the interests of their classmates. 'We help to improve the school,' said one, 'for example, choosing new equipment for the playground'. Older pupils act as buddies to help those who are younger. Pupils' good social skills in addition to the basic skills that they acquire give them a sound grounding for the next stage of schooling and adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Overall, teaching and learning are good. Typically, lessons are well planned and include clear explanations about what pupils are expected to learn. As a result, pupils know where to focus their efforts and learn effectively. Good use of the support offered by the local authority, as well as careful monitoring and feedback by senior staff and subject leaders have produced strong improvement and increasingly consistent use of recognised effective teaching methods. This has helped all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, as time is not wasted getting

used to different approaches. It has also meant that the school has coped better with staff absences than might otherwise have been the case. Although some parents have expressed concern about staff absences, many have also commented that they have been kept well informed and do not believe that their children will suffer in the longer term. This is because clear guidance has been available to supply teachers covering staff absences. Information gained from improved systems for assessing pupils' attainment is beginning to improve standards through target setting and the tracking of progress. Nevertheless, senior staff acknowledge that this process is new and not fully embedded in the school's culture.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Beginning in the Foundation Stage, the school provides a wide range of relevant and interesting learning opportunities that stimulate pupils' interest and imagination. Provision for basic skills is increasingly effective, including ICT, which is a strength of the school. The curriculum is modified to take account of the needs of the less able as well as those with particular talents. Visits and visitors extend and enliven the curriculum. A good range of popular clubs further stimulates interest and enthusiasm and there is good provision for music, dance and drama. French has recently been introduced into the main curriculum which adds further to pupils' enjoyment and interest in learning.

Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Pupils learn about other cultures, through their links with Ghana and China. While they acquire good knowledge through these links, their understanding of the United Kingdom itself as a rich multicultural community is more limited. The spacious grounds include excellent adventure playground apparatus.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Arrangements to ensure pupils' safety meet current requirements fully. Teachers and other staff know the pupils well and thoroughly understand their personal needs. Pupils and parents express confidence that staff give them all the support required in case of any difficulty. 'I am impressed with the level of extra support my son has received' is a typical parental comment. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and those of lower attaining pupils, are identified at an early stage and a range of good additional programmes is used to help them to overcome the challenges they face. The small number of pupils learning English as a new language is supported well by the school's staff. The school has secure systems in place for checking how well pupils are doing, and identifying those who are not making the progress they should. However, these procedures have only been recently introduced and staff are still refining ways of using information to set work and to support pupils fully in their understanding of how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers at all levels through the school work together as a united team, supporting the headteacher very effectively. Their pursuit of improvement, following the headteacher's lead, is exceptionally strong. For example, while the headteacher has been absent, the deputy headteacher has taken responsibility for leading the

school and effective improvement and development has continued. On joining the school the headteacher strengthened the school's systems for tracking progress and monitoring the school's performance. These systems are beginning to bear fruit in improving standards. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is managed effectively, as is that for children in Reception. Governors are fully involved in the work of the school and fulfil their responsibilities well. The school's recent track record of strong improvement supported by its good leadership means that the capacity for further improvement is strong.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	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	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	3

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?	3

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	1
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	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

4 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Willowbrook Primary School, Brentwood, CM13 2RG

Thank you for being so polite when Mrs Arora and I visited your school. It was good speaking to you and it was excellent to hear so many of you tell us that you enjoy school. We enjoyed our meeting with the school councillors, hearing their opinions about the school and how good it is. We agree with them that your school is good and that you make good progress. It is also improving because your headteacher and the staff work extremely well together to make things better for you.

Here are some more things that we like about your school.

- Your teachers teach you well and take good care of you.
- You behave well in class and around the school.
- Your support of your school clubs is very good. Gardening club, for example, helps to make the grounds look very attractive.
- You attend school well, so your school's attendance figures are better than those of most other schools.
- It is good that so many of your parents support the school and like what it does for you.

What we have asked your headteacher, the staff and the school's governors to do next.

- Keep working hard on teaching you to write and do mathematics well, so your work gets even better. You can help with this by working hard too.
- As more and more information about your progress becomes available, use it to provide lessons that suit you even more than they do now.

I hope that you will always be proud of your school and continue to enjoy it.

Yours sincerely,

John W. Paull Lead inspector