



The Willows Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124669
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293068
Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Andrew Matthews

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Downing Close
School category	Community		Ipswich
Age range of pupils	3–11		Suffolk IP2 9ER
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01473 683178
Number on roll (school)	139	Fax number	01473 683684
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Mark Fotheringham
		Headteacher	Ms Margo Barker
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector

Description of the school

This is a below average sized primary school which serves a large social housing estate in Ipswich. The great majority of the pupils are White British, but several pupils are from different ethnic backgrounds and some of these are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils' attainment on entry is very low and there is a higher than average proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties. A very high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs and has close links with a new Children's Centre that has opened on the school site. The school receives a deprivation grant to help it raise standards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Willows is a good school which has improved well since its last inspection. The school judges its effectiveness to be satisfactory but it underestimates its many strong features. It provides a good all round quality of education and very good care for its pupils. The school works effectively with its parents and the local community. Racial harmony is promoted well. Pupils' personal development is strong as a result of good care, support and guidance, and they are well challenged by their teachers. As a result, pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are happy and enthusiastic learners, work hard and make good overall progress.

The new children in Reception settle very well because of the very good induction systems. The provision is very good and children's needs are consistently well met. The experienced teachers provide very strong leadership and work very effectively with all the support staff. Very good links with the day care centre results in generous staffing ratios. Whilst children learn at a good pace, their attainment is still well below average in language skills when they start in Year 1.

The school's record keeping system is thorough but there is a lack of rigour in the way end of year targets are set for individual pupils and the way their progress is tracked towards these targets. Whilst standards have improved since the last inspection, standards in reading and writing are still not high enough. Standards in the present Year 6 are broadly average overall and progress in mathematics is exceptionally good.

Very good relationships underpin the work of the school, reflecting the school's strong commitment to all its pupils. The teachers are an enthusiastic team most anxious to do their best for all pupils. Whilst teaching and the curriculum are good overall, the programme for teaching reading skills is not well suited to the younger pupils. Teachers' marking is regular and encouraging but does not consistently tell pupils how to improve their work or move towards their targets. Experienced and well trained teaching assistants give well focused support, helping to ensure that all pupils are fully included in the work of the class. Pupils with learning and physical disabilities benefit from this very good support and make good progress.

Leadership and management of the school are good and all legal requirements are met. The headteacher provides strong leadership and has a clear vision of how the school can improve its provision. Good self-evaluation procedures give the school a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Staff, governors, parents and pupils are effectively involved in the process. The school's priorities for future development are rightly focused on improving standards, particularly in reading and writing. With its strong management team, the school is well placed for further improvement. Overall the school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Update the phonics' teaching programme to accelerate pupils' reading progress.
- Improve writing standards through the school.
- Strengthen the school's target setting and tracking systems.

- Ensure teachers' marking consistently informs pupils how to improve and how to move towards their individual targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with very low attainment, particularly in language and social development. After three years of improvements, results for last year's Year 2 fell in reading and writing. However, these pupils made very good progress in mathematics where standards were above national averages. Statistics for 2006 show that the Year 6 pupils made good overall progress from Year 3 and outstanding progress in mathematics. However, whilst standards in mathematics and science were near the national average, standards in English were significantly low, with less than half the pupils reaching the expected level. However, assessments show there is a good improvement in English in the current Year 6, but standards are still below average. Standards in mathematics and science are broadly average. More able pupils are now being appropriately challenged, resulting in an increasing proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the higher Level 5.

There is no discernible difference in the progress of boys and girls or between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. Teachers' improved planning ensures the great majority of pupils are appropriately challenged and achieving well. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are now satisfactory and standards in art are good. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive well focused support which enables them to be fully included in lessons and make the same good progress as their peers. Similarly, the good support for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English enables them to make good progress in developing their speaking skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They behave very well and are extremely enthusiastic about their learning. The work of the school council enables pupils to have an increasing say into how the school can improve. The school has worked hard and successfully to raise attendance and levels are now average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and keep safe. They make healthy eating choices and take part in the numerous activities that keep them fit. Pupils play an active role in the community and also regularly help to raise money for local and other charities. Pupils' strong personal qualities combined with their improving basic skills are giving them increasing opportunities for success within the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy lessons because learning is challenging and fast paced, and teachers have high expectations of them. Lessons are well planned to ensure learning builds successfully on pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers make learning fun and in an excellent Year 5 numeracy lesson, enjoyment was a particularly strong feature. Teachers are continually looking at ways of developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. In one very good Year 3/ 4 science lesson, there was outstanding group collaboration as pupils devised criteria for sorting different rocks. The effectiveness of the phonics teaching is lessened by the use of an outdated programme that does not move pupils on at a fast enough pace. The teaching of pupils who find learning harder is well matched to their needs. Experienced and highly trained teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with learning and physical disabilities and for those who are in the early stages of learning English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Learning activities are well planned and contribute to good progress being made by pupils. ICT is now used effectively to develop pupils' skills across subjects. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education because there are good curriculum links with the neighbouring high schools. Pupils' learning experiences are enriched by a wide range of visits and visitors. The wide range of extra activities during and after school has a strong uptake. The school actively encourages pupils to learn a musical instrument, such as the violin, trumpet, clarinet and recorder by paying tuition fees. Talented pupils are encouraged to take solo parts in productions and the high quality choir has been invited to sing at the Snape Maltings festival. Very good art work is celebrated in classrooms and in displays around the school

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are rightly very happy with the school's high levels of care, guidance and support. Breakfast and after school clubs are well attended. Pupils know the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and keeping safe because these are consistently reinforced by all staff. They feel safe because they know an adult will always listen to them if they are anxious and will help them sort out their problems when they occur. Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils very well and are skilled in identifying any of those experiencing particular personal or learning difficulties. Pastoral and medical care are good. Close links with external agencies ensure that pupils receive appropriate specialist help when needed. Robust procedures are in place to ensure pupils' security. Procedures for child protection and first aid are thorough. This very high level of support and care ensures that pupils are very keen to come to school and in a good frame of mind for

learning. The school has satisfactory systems to monitor pupils' progress, but its target setting and tracking procedures are not rigorous enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good and incisive leadership. She has worked unstintingly to improve pupils' personal development and raise standards. Very good support and training from the local authority has aided these improvements. The much improved self evaluation procedures clearly identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. Parents, governors, staff and pupils are consulted. The ensuing school improvement plan is accurately prioritised and addresses issues rigorously. Good progress has been made in addressing the issues from the last inspection. Subject leaders are effective in monitoring standards and resources are used well. Governance is good; governors are well informed and provide good levels of challenge and support to the school's developments. Well focused staff development has led to clear improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

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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	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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	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	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

2 March 2007

Dear Children

The Willows Primary, Downing Close, Ipswich, IP2 9ER

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I came to inspect your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting your teachers and seeing you at work in your lessons. It was also good to join you for your special awards assembly and school lunches, and hear your wonderful choir sing. A special 'thank you' to those who talked to me about their work and the things they like doing at school.

Here are the things that are good about your school.

- You thoroughly enjoy coming to school because you really like your teachers and the exciting work they plan for you to do.
- Your behaviour is good in lessons and at playtime.
- You work hard in lessons and your work is getting better.
- Your headteacher is doing a good job. She knows how to make the school even better for you.
- Those of you who find work difficult get the right sort of help, and you use it well.
- Your teachers and teaching assistants really care about you and how well you are doing.
- Your parents are very happy that you come to this school.

There are some things I have asked the school to do to help your learning.

- Help you improve your reading and writing even more.
- Ask your teachers to write more comments in your books to help you improve your work and reach your targets.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Matthews

Lead inspector