

Willow Bank Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109890
Local Authority	Wokingham Borough Council
Inspection number	310134
Inspection date	18 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Thrussell

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Davies
Headteacher	Mr Joe Moyster
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Duffield Road Woodley Reading RG5 4RW
Telephone number	01189 691556
Fax number	01189 697816

Age group	7-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, and leadership and management, gathering evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with children, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Willow Bank is a two-form entry junior school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. A lower than average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Of these, the majority have moderate learning needs. The school has recent awards for basic skills and financial management.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Willow Bank Junior is a good school. The committed headteacher, ably supported by a dedicated senior management team and governors, ensures a good quality of education for pupils. The care, guidance and support for pupils, and their personal development, are both outstanding. Good links with parents and other agencies, and developing links with other schools, contribute to these. Many parents have positive views of the school, but some feel that the school does not take sufficient account of their views and concerns. The inspection finds that the school listens to parents and generally keeps them well informed through its open door policy, regular newsletters, a web site and an active parent teacher association. Where there are particular concerns, the school deals with these appropriately. Pupils are very positive about the school and agree that 'The school really listens to us'. They feel extremely safe and secure, knowing that staff are there to help them if they have any concerns. Year 6 pupils act responsibly as peer mediators, helping to sort out any minor squabbles. Excellent relationships, and the many enrichment opportunities offered within the school's outstanding curriculum, help to promote pupils' personal and social development and their high levels of self-confidence and esteem. Parents appreciate the many extra-curricular opportunities the school provides, 'that help to make our children rounded individuals'. Pupils enjoy many things about school, as shown in their very good attendance. They particularly enjoy the wide range of sports on offer and know the importance of keeping fit. Along with a very clear understanding of what constitutes a sensible diet, pupils are extremely keen to adopt healthy lifestyles. Many play in the school's orchestra and sing in the choir, greatly enjoying the opportunities to perform. The school council takes its role seriously, knowing that it helps to make the school a better place. Pupils are also aware of the needs of the wider world and organise different fund raising activities. Behaviour is excellent, resulting in a harmonious school community and a strong eagerness to learn.

Achievement is good given pupils' above average starting points in Year 3. At the end of Year 6, standards have consistently been well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. In 2007, significant improvement in writing in Year 6 resulted from the introduction of a more structured approach, which encouraged pupils to look very closely at the quality and content of their writing. Consequently, the school exceeded the targets set for English, and is likely to do so again in the current year. Outstanding lessons, seen in Year 6, showed pupils' enthusiasm for this approach, with very good opportunities for them to analyse and evaluate their writing, in order to find out for themselves how to improve their work further. This approach is also now being used in Year 5 with some success. More able pupils, especially, consistently maintain above average standards throughout Key Stage 2. More than half achieved higher than the expected level in English, mathematics and science in the national tests at the end of Year 6. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties also achieve well due to the support they receive. This support has been particularly strong in English and has recently improved in mathematics. The school is now targeting relative weaknesses in mathematics and science. Action plans show that more opportunities are planned for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to problem solving, and a more practical, investigative approach is being promoted in science. The impact of these actions has yet to be shown on further raising achievement and standards in these subjects. Given their high level of basic skills and excellent personal development, pupils are extremely well prepared for their future life and learning.

New systems have been put in place to regularly assess pupils and to monitor their progress throughout the school. This starts early in Year 3, where the school's own assessments are linked with pupils' Key Stage 1 assessments, to set a baseline against which to measure future progress. Challenging end-of-year targets are set for teachers to plan towards, and for pupils to aim for. As part of performance management, teachers are accountable for the progress pupils make throughout the year. This is helping to ensure that teachers look more closely at the day-to-day progress pupils make to ensure that future lessons appropriately challenge all pupils. This practice, although starting to result in better progress by pupils, is not consistent. Nevertheless, teaching and learning overall are good. Lessons are generally well planned, prepared and managed. Success criteria are shared with pupils to help them gauge how well they are doing. Interactive white boards, used by both staff and pupils, help to enliven lessons. Teaching assistants work well alongside teachers in their supporting role. Activities are appropriately modified for those with statements of educational need, so that they are fully included in lessons. There are good opportunities for pupils to assess the work they are doing, particularly in writing, where they have individual targets to aim for. They understand how these targets provide guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils also appreciate the positive comments provided in marking.

The school improvement plan sets out appropriate areas for development, based on thorough monitoring and careful self-evaluation. Improvements in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), with the new computer suite, are now ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to use and develop their ICT skills in different subjects. This is helping to make learning even more interesting and purposeful. Leaders regularly monitor teaching and learning. Lesson observations, however, tend to focus more on what teachers are doing, rather than on what pupils are learning and how much progress they are making. Weaknesses in teaching are identified and support given, helping to maintain a high quality of teaching. Given improvements since the last inspection, for example in the provision for ICT and enhanced assessment and monitoring procedures, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make the fullest use of day-to-day assessment to plan what pupils need to learn next in order to meet their challenging targets.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

01 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willow Bank Junior School, Reading, RG5 4RW

I am writing to let you know what I found when I visited your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection. I spoke with some of you during my visit and you were interesting to talk to, very polite and helpful. You spoke very enthusiastically about enjoying school and all of the things you take part in. Willow Bank Junior is a good school, and some things about it are excellent.

I liked these things the most.

- You work hard and achieve well, especially in English.
- You behave extremely well and enjoy your lessons.
- The school supports you well when you find learning difficult.
- The school makes sure that you are safe and very well looked after.
- You have a very good range of clubs to choose from and particularly enjoy the orchestra, choir and the many opportunities for sport.
- You know the importance of eating the right things and staying fit and healthy.
- You are very keen to make suggestions for improving your school.
- You act very responsibly. The peer mediators do a good job in helping to sort out problems.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors do a good job.

The school carefully checks how well you are doing and the different levels at which you should be working. In order for the school to get even better, teachers need to make more use of this information, to plan what you need to learn next. This will ensure that you are all challenged to do your very best and so make the best progress possible. You can help by continuing to work hard, although not forgetting to enjoy your time at school.

I did enjoy visiting your school and watching you learn.

Yours sincerely

Peter Thrussell

Lead Inspector