

Willen Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 110388 |
| Local Authority | Milton Keynes |
| Inspection number | 310280 |
| Inspection dates | 27–28 February 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Andrew Matthews |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 371 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr David Neilson |
| Headteacher | Ms Linda Nouch |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7 July 2003 |
| School address | Beaufort Drive Willen Milton Keynes MK15 9HN |
| Telephone number | 01908 690098 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Willen Primary is a larger than average primary school situated in Milton Keynes. The school changed its status from a combined to a primary school in September 2006. The majority of the pupils now come from outside the school's catchment area. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has grown in recent years and some year groups have a quarter of their pupils with first languages other than English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is growing but is still lower than the national average. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has breakfast and after-school clubs and has received Healthy Schools status, Inclusion Quality Mark, Active Mark and FA Charter Mark status since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Willen Primary is a good school, which has improved since the last inspection. Parents are very positive about the education it provides and the good quality of care, guidance and support that their children receive. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, who is too modest in her assessment of the school's effectiveness, the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve further. This is a happy school where pupils work hard and develop strong relationships that help to promote their good personal development. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good because the school has successfully addressed previously identified weaknesses.

Effective leadership and management are the corner stone of the school's good provision. The headteacher is highly respected in the school community, and has worked very effectively with her deputy to improve important aspects of the school's provision. Provision for pupils whose home language is not English is now very well organised and these pupils are achieving well. The improved quality of teaching and learning in the Reception classes is leading to children making good progress in all areas of learning. Improved assessment and tracking systems enable the school to identify and address any underachievement. As a direct result, staff have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses because of its well-developed self-evaluation procedures. Its priorities for future development are well chosen and having a positive impact on standards. Governors are supportive but do not have systems in place to gather, first hand, their own evidence to help them judge how well the school is doing.

From a low starting point in Reception, pupils achieve consistently well as they move through the school. Regular assessment of pupils' work enables teachers to plan lessons that have the maximum impact on learning. Standards for this year's Year 6 show a clear improvement on the previous year, particularly in English, and are above average. However, the school has rightly identified raising standards further in writing as an ongoing focus. Pupils also make good progress in music, sport and art and use information and communication technology (ICT) increasingly to support their work in other subjects. Pupils enjoy their lessons but do not have enough opportunities to evaluate their work with their peers and their teachers.

The quality of teaching and learning is good because lessons are carefully planned and well paced. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and this has a positive impact on their rate of learning. The needs of different abilities are met by careful planning and well-focused work of the knowledgeable teaching assistants. However, teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and rarely refers to pupils' learning targets. The curriculum is good and enhanced by a very good range of popular after-school activities and a wide range of visits and visitors. The curriculum for modern foreign languages is outstanding giving pupils a genuine taste of European, African and Asian languages by using the expertise of both adults and pupils in the school. Pupils with learning or physical difficulties receive well planned support and make good progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress and achieve well because of the good teaching they receive. The strong teamwork, enthusiasm of all staff and their effective assessment of the children's progress

ensure all learning is accurately matched to individual children's needs. Children enter school with skills that are below those normally expected for this age group, especially in linking sounds and letters, writing and in understanding mathematical ideas. The great majority leave Reception having gained most of the skills expected for their age. This is good progress. Staff interact well with the children in their play, which promotes good quality language and encourages conversation. Because of this, relationships are good and the children respond positively and behave well. Resources are carefully chosen to ensure the learning is thoroughly reinforced through staff-led activities and children's play. Children make good use of the space available to them and especially enjoy playing outdoors. The school has rightly identified the need for a covered outside area to ensure play and learning are not restricted by the weather.

What the school should do to improve further

- Create more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their learning with their peers and teachers.
- Ensure teachers' marking consistently informs pupils how to improve their work and move towards their targets.
- Ensure governors collect more first hand evidence on their visits to help them judge how well the school is performing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Last year's dip in standards has been robustly addressed and standards in Year 6 are now above average in English and mathematics and average in science. The proportion of more able pupils attaining above national averages has also risen. There is no discernible difference in the achievement of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds because of the much improved pupil progress tracking systems. The school has rightly identified the need to raise standards in writing and its work in this area is having a positive impact on pupils' attainment. The school's assessment and support procedures work really well and parents speak very positively about how new pupils are effectively assimilated into the life and work of their classes. Pupils also achieve well in art, music, foreign languages and sport because the school makes very good use of specialist teachers. Pupils also make good progress in ICT and use computers increasingly effectively to support their learning in other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school successfully promotes pupils' personal development and well-being because it has efficient assessment systems in place and is strongly committed to ensuring that everyone feels valued and included. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has a positive influence on their behaviour and way they collaborate with each other in lessons. Pupils are proud of their school and show good appreciation for the achievements of others. They feel that they have 'a good school that's very friendly', where their views are valued. The school council has a strong voice in the life of the school and has influenced the setting up of the Chill Out zone and the Friendship Stop. Pupils are polite, self-disciplined and behave well in lessons and in the playground. They are appreciative of 'Golden time' as rewards for good work and behaviour. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping healthy and safe because the curriculum is well planned in these areas. Bullying is promptly addressed and this ensures pupils feel safe in school. Pupils make positive contributions to both the school and wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

'Learning is fun' was a comment from one pupil. Lessons are well planned and organised and the school makes good use of teachers' expertise. Relationships are good and behaviour is managed effectively, because teachers know their pupils well and make sure their needs are met. Staff plan lessons carefully and, with the able support of teaching assistants, ensure that pupils are on task and engaged in well-matched activities. This is particularly the case for pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities. Teachers make good use of the improved resources, such as the interactive white boards, to ensure lessons are interesting and well paced. Those pupils who need a boost in their learning are given additional help in small groups. This has been particularly effective in raising literacy standards. Whilst pupils' work is marked regularly, teachers are not consistent in informing them how to improve their work or move towards their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and the school is successfully developing links between different subjects in relevant and exciting ways. For example; a recent Year 5 topic on rivers involved music, ICT, literacy, science and geography. Numerous extra-curricular clubs, particularly in sports and music, visits, visitors and residential trips also help to bring the curriculum to life. The new phonics programme for Years 1 and 2 is having a positive impact on the pupils' reading and writing skills. Good guidance and support is provided for pupils with identified talents and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Special events, such as themed days, competitive matches and concerts develop pupils' self-esteem and enjoyment of learning. The curriculum and resources for ICT have improved significantly, making computers a natural part of the pupils' learning and improving standards across the school. The curriculum for pupils new to learning the English language is very good and enables them to make particularly good progress. Pupils are very enthusiastic about learning different languages because of the innovative approaches used by the specialist teacher.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for and supported in their learning. The school is a secure and welcoming environment. As one parent said, 'you feel you matter'. Parents are very supportive of the school and its work. There is a strong ethos and expectation that all pupils are fully included in the activities provided. There are clear procedures in place to ensure that potential hazards are identified and addressed so that pupils remain safe. Pupils know what to do if they have any concerns. Systems to assess and track pupils' progress are good and identify those pupils who need more help and support to achieve their full potential. Pupils are keen to reflect on their learning and ways to improve their work, but sometimes they are unsure about specific targets to help them to meet the next steps in their learning. There are good links within the local community to support and extend the pupils' learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very strong leadership and management for the school. The newly developed management systems involving team leaders make good use of teachers' experience and subject expertise and ensure that staff know what to do and how to do it. Thorough self-evaluation procedures ensure planned developments are most effective in helping the school improve. Target setting and the tracking of pupils' progress are robust and help to identify any pupil underperformance. Staff development is particularly strong and links closely to the school's priorities. Focused spending on resources, and particularly in ICT and reading books, has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement and their enthusiasm for learning. The school has developed very good links with outside agencies, local businesses and other schools to improve its provision. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very keen to support the school but their understanding of how well the school is doing relies too much on evidence presented to them by the headteacher.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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|---|-----|
| 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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| 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 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 | 3 |
| 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

12 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willen Primary School, Milton Keynes, MK15 9HN

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and watching you working with your teachers. It was good to speak with your teachers about how well you do at school. We also enjoyed listening to the choir's singing in assembly. We think that you and your teachers have worked very hard together to make yours a good school and such an interesting one to visit. Your school does many things well but there are some things we feel it can do, to make it even better.

What we liked most about your school

- Your headteacher is doing a very good job. She knows what to do to make the school better for you.
- Your teachers and all those who work with you in the classroom look after you well and help you improve your work.
- You really enjoy school, behave well and have very good relationships with each other and your teachers.
- You have lots of opportunities to play your part in the life of the school.
- Those of you who find work difficult or who are learning to speak English are getting the right sort of help and you use it well.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Make sure that when your teachers mark your books they let you know how you can improve your work and move towards your targets.
- Give you more opportunities to talk about what you learn in lessons with your classmates and your teachers.
- Make sure the governors develop some different ways of finding out for themselves about how well you and the school are doing.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Matthews

Lead Inspector