

Willingdon Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114422
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311594
Inspection date	1 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	452
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	60
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Fitzpatrick
Headteacher	Anna Reid
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Rapsons Road Willingdon Eastbourne BN20 9RJ
Telephone number	01323 482619
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the quality of pupils' writing and their problem solving skills in mathematics, and how governors challenge the school to improve. Evidence was gathered from the school's data on pupils' progress, lesson observations, looking at pupils' work and school documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, the chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments in nearly all areas, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than average. Children's attainment on entry to the EYFS (Reception) has, until very recently, been below that expected for their age. These levels are gradually rising. There are a very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The number of pupils with more severe disabilities is higher than normally found. This is partly because there are a small number of pupils with impaired hearing and/or vision who attend the school full time. They are taught together in a hearing-impaired unit sited within the school for parts of the week and in class for the remainder.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Willingdon is a good school. It has some excellent features, which help pupils of all abilities to grow in confidence and achieve well. It is very popular and the vast majority of parents express very positive views. They are especially pleased with the way the school cares for their children. One parent reflected the views of many by saying, 'I have been delighted with school and my children thoroughly enjoy coming.'

Children get off to a good start in the EYFS because of the good arrangements to ensure their smooth move from pre-schools. As a result, they make good progress, with many reaching above average levels by the time they start Year 1. This prepares them well for their start in their next classes. Until recently, this had not been the case so pupils did not always reach the standards expected, particularly by Year 2. However, recently, pupils have been reaching higher standards in Year 2 and above average standards in their work by the time they leave Year 6. The most recent National test results indicate this trend has continued, although boys lag behind the girls in mathematics. However, past weaknesses in pupils' writing abilities are being remedied and innovative approaches in teaching are working effectively. The small number of pupils with severe hearing or vision difficulties have a good range of support through the school and in their time spent together in the hearing-impaired unit. This provides them with additional specialised support of high quality. As a result they, along with others who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve as well as their classmates.

Although a large school, parents believe that there is, as one put it, 'an intimate atmosphere' created. This is largely due to the excellent levels of care and guidance the school provides. High quality arrangements are in place to ensure pupils' good day-to-day welfare and all, including teaching assistants, are especially mindful of those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's approach to safeguarding pupils is effective. As pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are closely supported, they feel very safe and extremely positive about school. This helps all pupils to flourish and they really enjoy all the activities the school offers. Simple target setting routines help pupils to guide their learning, aided by frequent discussions with their teacher. The tone is set by a caring team of staff, aided by the positive direction of senior leaders. Pupils leave as mature and thoughtful learners, well prepared for their next school.

Among the key strengths of the good teaching and curriculum found throughout the school is teachers' use of interesting practical activities such as specialised 'theme' days to enliven learning. Typically, pupils speak fondly about the effort their teachers make. As some pupils said, 'They are always dressing up as famous people to help make lessons fun.' Teachers focus well on key basic skills, and pupils' standards in writing have improved as a result. Past work covering many subjects reflects the good breadth of the curriculum, while music and art activities add a creative dimension to pupils' experience. Teaching has few significant weaknesses, although opportunities for activities that are 'boy friendly' or make mathematical work more 'real' are sometimes missed. However, some more able pupils attend a local secondary school for some extra activities which stretch their thinking. Comments on pupils' work pinpoint key areas for pupils to work on. Underpinning much of the school's success is the excellent provision that it makes for pupils' personal development. It helps them have a well developed sense of right and wrong. As a result, they behave brilliantly and play and work harmoniously together. They know about and try hard to adopt safe, healthy lives. Several pupils said they really try to eat sensibly and one said he 'loved' his roast chicken lunch! Pupils are very active, not only

through physical education lessons, but also through the lively activities they enjoy at playtimes, after school clubs and inter-school competitions. The school council is very active and pupils liked it when they influenced the choice and quality of food at lunchtimes. The pupils' awareness of their own culture is good, and links with the local community such as arts festivals, youth radio and the parish council help broaden their knowledge. The school's commitment to community cohesion is good. The school's status as an 'international school' is well founded, as it has very well developed links with countries abroad and has recently hosted visitors and teachers from Swiss schools.

The many improvements and developments since the last inspection illustrate the good leadership and management of the senior leaders. The school runs smoothly and a very good team approach is evident. The strong focus on improvement has succeeded in raising pupils' attainment over time, as well as building on the quality of teaching and pupils' personal development. Governors, who support the school well and visit regularly, provide the right degree of balance between keeping their 'finger on the pulse' of school life and in challenging the senior leaders to improve further. Regular questionnaires both to parents and pupils, combined with monitoring of activities in classes, help inform the school's self-evaluation and priorities set for improvement. Parents overwhelmingly recognise the good work of staff and governors. Given the rate of improvement, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children have a good start and settle in quickly to the routines set for them. They achieve well in most areas of learning and more recently now reach above average levels by the time they start in Year 1. The leadership of the EYFS is good and one reason why parents speak so positively about the smooth start that their children make. Welfare arrangements for pupils are good and close links with local playgroups and nurseries help ease the process. A strong focus on developing children's personal and social development, language and number skills ensures they make good progress in these areas of the curriculum. Activities motivate the children, who enjoyed the story of the bad tempered ladybird and confidently explained what they were doing. There is a good focus on developing children's social skills and they interact well with each other. A good balance exists between activities directed by the teacher and those the children choose themselves. Their independent skills develop well although the outside activity area is not as inviting as the inside classroom. Despite a good sized outside area, children's physical development is satisfactory rather than good because of the lack of suitable equipment, especially to climb on.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils in Years 1 to 6, particularly boys, more mathematical work related to 'real life' and practical situations to raise their achievement further.
- Improve the resources in the outside activity areas for EYFS children so they have better opportunities to enrich their physical and creative skills.

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Annex A

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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
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	1
The extent to which 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	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 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?	1

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 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

3 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willingdon Primary School, Willingdon BN20 9RJ

I am writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. We really enjoyed visiting you. We think your school is good. It has some excellent features. Your parents and carers agree with us that Willingdon is a caring and welcoming place.

Here are some of the things we found out.

- You reach above average standards in lots of your work, particularly your writing, although the boys could do a bit better in some subjects such as mathematics.
- The children in Reception make good progress and have lots of fun.
- The range of things you get to do is good and we enjoyed looking at the work you do. I liked listening to the music group at playtime.
- The school really makes sure you are very safe and well cared for. You know the targets your teachers set for you and this helps you improve your work.
- Your links with the local community are good. Well done for winning some local competitions. Your links with schools overseas give you a great understanding of how others live. The recent festival you had on Chinese customs and culture looked really exciting.
- The teaching is really good. When teachers pretend to be Dr Barnardo or Hamlet it must be great fun.

We have asked the school to do a couple of things to help it improve further.

- Give you more mathematical activities, particularly the boys, that relate more to real life or practical situations.
- Give the children in Reception more outside equipment so they can really stretch their physical abilities.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and keeping up your excellent behaviour.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge Lead inspector