

Willowbrook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120056
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	313495
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	377
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nelson Renner
Headteacher	Sara McAdam
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Roborough Green Thurnby Lodge Leicester LE5 2NA
Telephone number	01162 413756
Fax number	01162 419669

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2007
Inspection number	313495

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a bigger school than average. There is a wide social mix among pupils, with some coming from challenging backgrounds. Children enter the school with levels of abilities that are below those typical for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties/and or disabilities (LDD) is slightly above the figure found nationally. The deputy headteacher became the acting headteacher at the beginning of this term. The school has a breakfast club and 'Healthy Schools' and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Willowbrook provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It has improved recently, particularly in the way that pupils now make better progress in their work. One parent, typical of many, recognised the school's good points by saying 'the school helps children become well rounded'. As a result of improvements, pupils are steadily reaching higher standards in their work.

There is a good atmosphere in the school as most pupils behave well within classrooms, where they generally cooperate willingly. Some pupils do not always manage to keep up their good behaviour, particularly if explanations in class are long or when not directly supervised around school. The satisfactory care and guidance the school provides is helping ensure their personal qualities and general well-being develop more quickly. As a result, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enjoy school and feel safe. A small number of pupils find it hard to attend regularly, despite the school's efforts to encourage them.

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English, achieve satisfactorily. They have a secure start to school in the Nursery and Reception classes and make steady progress. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' progress, while generally satisfactory, is more uneven. This is due partly to some variations in the quality of teaching, particularly for those who are more able. Staff keep a close eye on pupils' progress, although the information collected is not used effectively enough to influence the quality of teaching and planning in order for pupils to learn more quickly. The pupils reach broadly average standards by the time they leave but their writing and mathematical skills, while improving, are below the standards expected. This is because teaching does not always develop pupils' confidence in calculation work, and recent improvements in writing are taking time to become established. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the previous inspection. A suitable range of other curriculum activities helps broaden pupils' horizons and develop their activity levels. As one remarked, 'I really like doing other subjects like music and games; they are fun!'

The acting headteacher, supported by governors, has quickly identified areas of weakness. Some initiatives are already beginning to halt the decline in pupils' attainment. Other areas have not improved to the same degree. This is partly because checks on teaching do not result in good practice in all year groups. Senior staff work together well but sometimes have 'too many balls to juggle'. This is being addressed but is slowing the pace of development. Good links with others in the local community and professionals outside the school help give specific pupils good levels of support for their needs. The governors are supportive and visit the school regularly. Despite some uncertainty caused by a change in school leadership, they are helping to maintain the satisfactory level of leadership and management.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress in their learning, but make good progress in their social and physical skills. They enjoy their time at school and parents confirm this. There are effective links with parents to keep them well informed of their children's progress. Teaching is good, particularly in developing pupils' social and personal skills. This helps them settle in quickly. Their language and writing standards do not improve at the same rate and only about half meet

the expected levels for their age. Outdoor activities are particularly effective in stretching their creative skills and physical development. Teachers keep a close eye on children's progress to guide their next learning steps. Clear and simple routines help them to feel safe. Teaching assistants support children well, particularly those with specific difficulties.

What the school should do to improve further

- help pupils in Years 1 to 6 gain more confidence and skill in number and calculation work to improve their attainment in mathematics
- ensure that information on pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6 is used more effectively to set challenging work, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils
- ensure that monitoring by staff, particularly of teaching, focuses more on pupils' learning and is used effectively to extend good teaching to all year groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school has started to raise pupils' attainment to broadly average levels. Their progress is satisfactory, but patchy through the school. Children make a secure start in the Nursery and Reception classes, particularly in their social and personal development. This secure start is not built upon consistently in Years 1 to 6. In mathematics, pupils, particularly the most able, make slower progress than they should, as activities do not ensure a confident grasp of skills in number calculation. In English, pupils' standards in writing, while improving significantly in some year groups, still need improvement. More pupils reach their targets, due to a special support programme used to ensure systematic teaching of basic skills, particularly in English and now in mathematics. Achievement across the school as a whole is satisfactory. In science, pupils' attainment is closer to average. Pupils' skills in ICT have generally improved because of better teaching and resources such as the computer suite. The school's own checks on current work indicate that the pupils' improving progress in Years 1 to 6 is helping more meet their targets and get nearer to the levels expected for their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

A clear focus on pupils' well-being and personal development has helped maintain satisfactory levels through the school. Behaviour is often good in class, particularly for the youngest children. This means that pupils learn better. Around the school, this often slips to a more satisfactory level when they need more self-discipline. Pupils say that staff, aided by initiatives such as the anti-bullying club, help them feel safe as they act promptly if difficulties arise. Attendance, although below average, is improving because of the school's hard work in promoting it. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community such as being 'friendship savers' to classmates and helping charities by fundraising. Pupils' cultural awareness develops well for most pupils, due to initiatives such as a 'world awareness week', but a small minority do not always respect others' varied backgrounds or beliefs. Those who take on additional responsibilities, for example as members of the school council, feel that they have helped improve aspects like wet playtime resources. Pupils try hard to adopt healthy lifestyles and they keep active during playtimes and physical education lessons. Pupils are better prepared for the next stage of their education as their ICT skills are more secure and they rise to simple responsibilities, but weaknesses in their number and written work hinder their confidence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of higher quality teaching, but it is not yet a consistent feature across the school. In most classes, relationships are good and staff set clear expectations about behaviour so that pupils listen carefully and are keen to learn. However, their learning is hampered when activities are not planned well enough to capture their interest and the more able pupils are not fully stretched. Some explanations are also overly long so that some pupils 'switch off' and become restless. In most classes, pupils are clear about what they are to learn, because teachers explain the aims of lessons carefully. A Year 3 science lesson was excellent in developing pupils' desire to investigate a problem. All staff make good use of new technology to enhance lessons. Pupils who have specific learning needs or are at an early stage of learning English are helped in their learning by skilful support staff, often in small groups. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. In English, marking is detailed and gives clear guidance about how to improve, but is not as good in mathematics and science work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is a sound balance between developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills while broadening their experience in creative activities such as drama, music and art. A special support programme ensures basic skills are taught more systematically. It is bearing fruit in writing and increasingly in mathematics and science work. To make lessons more engaging, the school has recently introduced a topic-based approach called the 'connected curriculum'. This is beginning to enliven lessons, but is not a feature found in all year groups. Those pupils with special abilities benefit from additional opportunities such as a 'Bright Sparks' science programme. Pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities benefit from a range of support in small groups to boost their progress. ICT work is now planned regularly, often using the computer suite to extend activities. Those pupils who are at the early stages of learning English have well-planned activities which enable them to keep pace with classmates. The curriculum is enhanced with an interesting range of visits and visitors, along with extra-curricular clubs, which add to the pupils' enjoyment of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Children make a smooth start to school life in the Nursery and Reception classes, while links with the secondary school support the transfer for older pupils when they leave. Teachers and teaching assistants show a consistent approach to caring for pupils. They appreciate that they can ask for help when needed, such as talking with a 'friendship saver' or member of staff. As a result, they feel safe. As one parent noted accurately, 'they really do care when your child needs help'. Pupils have equipment at lunchtime to help promote cooperative play but at morning playtimes, many pupils have little to occupy them. Pupils say these playtimes 'can be a bit boring'. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust. The school takes health and safety issues seriously when raised by staff, pupils or parents. Staff keep a close eye on the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ensure there is a good range of support, including professional expertise beyond school. Children who are at the early stages of learning English also have close support, which helps their progress in lessons. While pupils

have clear targets set for them, particularly in English, not all are sure how they can use these to guide their learning. As a result, not all pupils, particularly the more able, are challenged to do their best work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher has succeeded in providing stability during staffing changes, while re-evaluating some areas of the school's work. There is a determination to get the school 'back on track', following a period where pupils' attainment and achievement declined. This has helped move the school forward, particularly by using professional support beyond the school, but there is still more to do. Self-evaluation is well established. Priorities for development are clear, but the high number, shared between too few staff, is slowing progress at times. Monitoring of teaching is regular and wide-ranging. Although it provides lots of information, it does not focus closely enough on assessing what makes pupils' learning even more effective. This makes it more difficult to spread effective practice to all classes. Governors give the school satisfactory support. They provide a good sounding board for ideas and concerns and give some challenge to longer-term direction, but this is only recently becoming more effective as they share more closely with senior staff in the improvement process. The school's success in raising pupils' achievement nearer to those levels expected, by improving ICT provision for example, indicate there is satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
--	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

15 November 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Willowbrook Primary School, Leicester, LE5 2NA

Thank you for making us feel welcome at your school when we visited it recently. Yours is a satisfactory school, which is trying to be even better and is succeeding. It has some good things about it.

Here are some of the things we found out:

- children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle in well and learn to work together happily
- you said you feel safe and liked the way that the staff handled any bullying that takes place
- you now make satisfactory progress in your work and reach close to average standards, particularly in science and in your writing, but your mathematics work could be better
- teachers explain things well and always tell you what you are expected to learn
- the activities you do, such as your topic work and musical activities, are fun and interesting
- you know that keeping active is important and you are trying to eat healthily
- many of you behave well, although some of you could behave better outside of the classrooms
- your involvement with the local community and your fundraising activities are good.

We have asked the school to do three things:

- help you do a wider variety of mathematics work in Years 1 to 6 so that you learn to solve number problems, like subtraction, more quickly and confidently
- ask the teachers to use the information that they have about your progress to plan activities that stretch your thinking even more, especially for those who are capable of harder work
- ensure that the good ideas for teaching seen in some classes are shared better with all teachers to help all of you learn as well as you can.

You can help the school become even better by trying hard in lessons and by being the best ambassadors for your school all of the time.

Best Wishes,

Kevin Hodge Lead Inspector