

Willows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124161
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314825
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gordon Hudson
Headteacher	Duncan Birds
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2003
School address	Anglesey Road off Weston Road Lichfield WS13 7NU
Telephone number	01543 510786
Fax number	01543 419970

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

In this much larger than average primary school, the majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. On entry to school in the Nursery, children's skills are below those expected for their age. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark 2 and Eco Bronze award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school provides pupils with a safe and friendly environment in which to learn. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils are very enthusiastic and have very positive attitudes towards learning. They really want to succeed. A key factor is an interesting, stimulating curriculum, which one pupil described as 'fun but challenging'. Behaviour is outstanding and this has a positive influence on the progress pupils make. They willingly take responsibility, for example, through membership of the school council or eco-committee, or as a peer mediator. Pupils make a very positive contribution to the life of the school. The majority of parents are supportive and appreciate the care and help given to their children. As one parent typically said, 'I feel the school excels in every way. There is a friendly, yet disciplined atmosphere where children thrive.' A good start is made in the Foundation Stage. Good teaching ensures good progress and by the end of Reception, children are working securely within the goals expected for their age. Good progress continues and by the end of Year 6 standards are above average overall. Achievement is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are sensitively supported and also make good progress. However, although more able pupils are challenged well in mathematics and science, in writing too few pupils attain the higher Level 5. This is because pupils do not confidently use and apply their writing skills in a wide range of different types of writing. Overall teaching and learning are good. Teachers are skilled at engaging pupils' interest through the use of interactive whiteboards. Marking is good and provides pupils with clear guidance about how to improve their work. However, pupils are not given time to respond to this guidance. Underpinning the work of the school is good leadership and management. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have an accurate picture of the school and they know that it has even further to go in raising standards and achievement, particularly in writing. Although pastoral care and support are good, academic guidance is not quite as strong. The detailed tracking system is useful for measuring pupils' progress over time, but apart from Year 6 and Year 2, pupils' do not have end-of-year targets. In addition, the targets that are set for the more able are not challenging enough. This means the leadership is not able to check rigorously if standards are high enough across the school. However, the consistently above average standards in mathematics and science, and the school's recent successes, for example, in improving information and communication technology (ICT), demonstrate its good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children thrive in the Foundation Stage, which is led and managed well. Good liaison with parents helps to ensure children settle quickly and enjoy school. Classrooms provide a vibrant and stimulating environment, and areas to encourage learning both inside and outside, are planned for carefully. Teaching and learning are good and the classroom is carefully organised to enable children to make choices about their learning. However, an area to excite and interest children to choose to write, is not evident, particularly for boys. By the time children leave Reception, their knowledge and skills are similar to those expected for their age. However, boys do not make as much progress as girls in developing their writing or creative skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly of the more able, and ensure that pupils confidently use their writing skills in a wide range of different types of writing.

- Provide pupils with the opportunity to respond to teachers' marking in their books in order that they can improve their work.
- Set challenging targets for all pupils throughout the school, so that leaders can check more rigorously if standards are high enough.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards are above average in mathematics and science. In English, standards are broadly average. These standards represent good achievement from entry into the school in the Nursery, when the level of children's skills is below that expected for their age. In mathematics and science, more able pupils are challenged well, as indicated by the above average proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 at the end of Year 6 in 2007. In English, particularly in writing, this challenge is less evident. Pupils do not confidently use and apply their writing skills in a wide range of different types of writing. Standards in ICT are above those expected, because the school has developed well the teaching, resources and range of learning experiences that it provides. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties make good progress because of good targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy all aspects of school life and attendance is above average. They like their lessons, their teachers and their friends. 'Everyone is kind and helpful here,' commented one pupil. Their excellent behaviour stems from a very well developed understanding of right and wrong. Pupils have a high level of respect for each other, for adults and for people with religions and traditions different from their own. Pupils report that there is very little bullying. They feel extremely safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe. For example, they are very aware of the dangers of drugs and solvent abuse. Pupils do their very best to take regular exercise, and choose the healthy option at meal times. They are keen to accept responsibility as playground 'pals' and as peer mediators. School council members are proud of the work they do, for example, improving playground facilities. Pupils readily contribute to the wider community through fund raising and taking part in fetes, performances and other activities in the local community. Above average standards and positive attitudes prepare pupils well for secondary school and future employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils' good progress is the result of lively, well planned teaching and learning. Skilful use of interactive whiteboards stimulates interest and encourages pupils' involvement. For example, the 'Silent Invader' programme very effectively engaged Year 3 pupils as they eagerly identified silent letters in words such as 'catch' and 'know'. Pupils willingly ask and answer questions, knowing contributions will be respected. Because teachers explain the purpose of the lesson clearly, pupils know what they are learning and in most instances they have a good understanding of how to achieve success with their work. Pupils' behaviour is managed well and teachers lead by example, resulting in a calm, orderly working atmosphere throughout school. Teachers' marking is good and pupils are often given helpful advice about how well they are doing, and

how they could make their work even better. However, time is not given for pupils to act upon this advice. Teaching assistants sensitively support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so they take a full part in all classroom activities and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils say the curriculum is 'interesting and exciting'. They speak with enthusiasm about the many experiences provided. For example, they value the visits and theme days, such as Victorian Day when pupils learn for themselves how it would be to go to school during this period of history. They eagerly participate in the many afterschool clubs, enjoy learning a modern foreign language, and benefit from tuition to learn to play a range of musical instruments. The school is successfully implementing the new Primary Frameworks for English and mathematics. These are helping teachers to encourage pupils to become independent learners. However, there is still some way to go before pupils become skilled in using and applying their writing skills across the curriculum. ICT is a strength and pupils have very good opportunities to use this resource to support their learning. Although pupils know people are different and respect their differences, pupils' knowledge of the variety of cultures and faiths is insufficiently developed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'Everyone is a friend', said a pupil in Year 5, which reflects how safe pupils feel at school. They say staff always listen and will help them if they are worried or upset. They think the 'worry boxes' in classrooms are a good idea. Pupils report very few incidents of bullying or racist behaviour. Good systems are in place to ensure this and pupils make use of peer mediators to resolve any difficulties that arise. The school effectively implements statutory procedures aimed to ensure the safety and protection of pupils. Not surprisingly, a Year 6 pupil stated, 'I really like it here.' A comprehensive system for tracking pupils' progress is in place. However, end of year targets are currently only in place for pupils in Year 6 and Year 2, and those for the more able in writing are not sufficiently challenging.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership provides clear direction and all staff share a strong determination to improve the quality of education. Morale is high. The school has an accurate overview of its effectiveness, its strengths and areas for development. This has led to many improvements since the previous inspection. For example, upgrading computer provision has raised pupils' standards in ICT. Targets are currently only set for Year 6 and Year 2 pupils and these are not always sufficiently challenging for the more able. In addition, although the tracking system allows leaders to check progress, the lack of targets for all pupils limits their effectiveness in checking that standards are high enough across the school and in making teachers more accountable for the standards attained. Governors are supportive. They have a clear grasp of the quality of education. They understand the significance of assessment information and use their knowledge well to challenge the school's performance.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	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	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

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	3
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

8 February 2008 Dear Children Inspection of Willows Primary School, Lichfield, WS13 7NU
Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about the things you do. It was a pleasure to hear how much you like your teachers and enjoy school. We agree with you when you say that Willows is a good school. We were very pleased to hear you feel safe, and adults take good care of you. Your behaviour is outstanding, and we think you and your parents should be very proud of this, and of how polite and friendly you are. We think the school council, ecocommittee and peer mediators work very hard to make the school a happy and safe place to be. Keep this up! We understand why you enjoy learning, as the teaching is good and you do lots of interesting activities. We wish we could have visited the school on Victorian Day - that seems as if it was great fun! We think you make good progress and by the time you leave in Year 6, you are reaching standards in mathematics and science that are above those in most primary schools. Well done! In English, you do slightly less well and we think you could do better in your writing. We have asked your teachers to give you many opportunities to use your writing skills in different types of writing. We think this will help. Your teachers give you good ideas about how to improve your work and now we have asked them to give you time to use this help to make your work even better. Those of you who sometimes find learning difficult make good progress because adults give you the help that you need. Your headteacher, teachers and governors have good ideas about how to make your school even better. They certainly have improved the ICT resources since the last inspection. Many of you are now very good at using ICT to help you learn. We have asked the leaders of your school to improve the way they check how well you are learning by making sure you all have targets to achieve by the end of each year. We think that this will help you all to make the progress of which you are capable. Thank you once again. You can make your school even better by continuing to work hard and asking your teachers if you can have the time to follow their good advice to make your work even better. Yours faithfully Mrs Furness Lead inspector



8 February 2008

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Inspection of Willows Primary School, Lichfield, WS13 7NU

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We were very pleased to hear you feel safe, and adults take good care of you. Your behaviour is outstanding, and we think you and your parents should be very proud of this, and of how polite and friendly you are. We think the school council, eco-committee and peer mediators work very hard to make the school a happy and safe place to be. Keep this up! We understand why you enjoy learning, as the teaching is good and you do lots of interesting activities. We wish we could have visited the school on Victorian Day - that seems as if it was great fun!

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Thank you once again. You can make your school even better by continuing to work hard and asking your teachers if you can have the time to follow their good advice to make your work even better.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Furness
Lead inspector