

Willow Wood Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135256
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	319624
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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)	278
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Coldrick
Headteacher	Mrs Jean Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bradbury Road Wharton Winsford Cheshire CW7 3HN

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
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Telephone number
Fax number

01606 593896
01606 595400

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school located in an area of significant social disadvantage. It was opened in September 2007 as a result of the amalgamation of former infant and junior schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very high when compared to most schools. Almost all pupils are White British. The school provides for a significant number of pupils from Traveller families. It also provides specialist resourced provision for 20 pupils with moderate and complex learning needs. The overall proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those not taught in the resourced provision, is almost double the national average. Most children who enter Reception begin their Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) education in the pre-school provision located in the adjacent children's centre.

The school currently holds Inclusion Quality Mark, Activemark and Artsmark awards and has achieved the Healthy Schools Standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school which provides pupils with a satisfactory education. Pupils are well cared for and their personal development is good.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes well to their good personal attitudes and relationships. Pupils are mindful of others' needs and respect cultural differences, both in school and in the wider community. Pupils gain a good understanding of the cultural differences across the world through stories of teachers' experiences abroad, information teachers bring back from their visits to different countries and through the cultural activities planned in school. Pupils feel safe in school and say that there is no bullying or name-calling. They enjoy school and attend regularly. Pupils like their lessons because, they say, 'teachers make them fun and give us lots to do'. All pupils have a clear understanding of how a sensible diet and regular exercise are important to good health. Visitors, such as those from the emergency services, alert pupils to potential risks to their safety so that they are better informed about how to protect themselves. Pupils develop a good sense of responsibility and community spirit because they involve themselves in school life. The school council is very active and, for example, has successfully negotiated the building of a pond and seating area to improve the school grounds. Others act as play leaders to help keep everyone active during lunchtimes and there is no shortage of volunteers to make sure that the school is kept tidy. Through the school's good links with local businesses, community groups and other schools, pupils develop some of the skills they will need to become able members of a community and to secure their future economic well-being.

Children's knowledge and skills on entry to Reception are well below those typical for their age. They make sound progress as they move through the school and most groups achieve satisfactorily overall. Pupils who receive specialist resourced provision make good progress. Their learning is planned well to meet their particular needs. Teachers create a calm and supportive environment in which independence is encouraged and pupils' efforts are valued. School assessments indicate that standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2008 were well below expectations particularly in English and mathematics. However, new systems for assessing pupils' work and for tracking their progress, which were introduced after the amalgamation, are beginning to impact on raising standards. Teachers are beginning to make better use of assessments to focus more sharply on what pupils need to learn. As a result, current assessments show that standards are improving at both key stages, particularly in writing.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Overall, teachers are responding well to the direction and support given through the school's working partnership with the local authority. Teachers have improved their skills in assessing pupils' work. However, there are still some inconsistencies in practice to be ironed out with regard to planning accurately for pupils' different abilities, checking their progress and giving them clear guidance through marking. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enriched well by the range of visits and clubs which contributes to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their good personal development and well-being.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher has successfully shaped the two former schools into a single unit and improvements in standards and in teaching and learning are gathering pace under her clear direction and effective leadership. The school is working well in partnership with the local authority. An important step taken is that the roles

of senior managers and subject leaders have been clearly defined. However, these are at the early stages of development with regard to monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. This currently means that the school has a satisfactory rather than a good capacity to improve further. An incisive audit of the school's overall performance has enabled managers to conduct an accurate self-evaluation and set appropriate priorities for the school's development. Higher expectations are reflected in the school's realistic, yet challenging targets. This is a school which welcomes the whole community, provides equally for its needs and promotes community cohesion well. The school's links with the local community are very strong. These include links with the adjacent children's centre, support for vulnerable families and children, and learning partnerships with families, businesses and schools. The school also houses a well-used community children's library while a new one, which pupils helped to design, is being built. Governors support the school well and are committed to its success. They provide satisfactory support and challenge and manage finances efficiently to provide satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision for children in the EYFS is managed satisfactorily. Children enter Reception with skills well below those expected for their age, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy. Staff pay close attention to developing children's personal and social skills and children make good progress in this area of learning. They quickly learn to take turns and to play safely alongside one another. Progress in other areas of learning is satisfactory and by the end of Reception, children are working steadily towards their early learning goals. Planning covers all areas of learning satisfactorily, but not enough use is made of the outside area to allow children to develop their skills independently through investigation and play. Although EYFS staff evaluate children's learning, these assessments are not used consistently well to plan the next steps for children in order to challenge them sufficiently nor to extend the skills they have learned. Children's health and safety are given high priority. The quality of care is good and the new EYFS welfare requirements are fully met. There are good partnerships with parents because of the school's strong links with Sure Start. This helps children to settle quickly in Reception and to feel secure.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Ensure teachers use assessment information consistently to plan suitable work for pupils of varying abilities in order to accelerate the progress of all groups.
- Develop senior and middle managers' roles with regard to monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Although standards are currently well below average at both key stages, particularly in English and mathematics they are improving. From well below expected starting points when children enter Reception, progress picks up throughout the school with more pupils than previously reaching the year-on-year targets set for them in reading, writing

and mathematics. This is due to improved systems for checking on pupils' progress and for setting more appropriate targets. The significant number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not taught in the resourced provision make satisfactory progress. They benefit from additional help in small groups to boost their literacy and numeracy skills. Children from Traveller families are supported well in school. Care is taken to make sure they access the learning they need and, overall, they make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school life. They are enthusiastic about their lessons and the wide range of additional activities, especially their residential visits to the Lake District and Wales. Attendance is good. Pupils behave well. They are polite, well mannered and show respect towards adults and each other. Caring attitudes are shown in the way in which pupils give generously to various charities. Pupils are keen to be involved in community events, both in and out of school. For example, a group volunteered to help to clear litter from around the estate. Some have been involved in the design of community buildings, as well as improvements to the school grounds. The recently formed school choir has already won the praise of local audiences. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep fit and to stay healthy and safe. There is a travel plan to encourage those who do not normally walk to school to do so and after-school sports clubs are popular. By the time pupils leave Willow Wood they are confident to face the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers establish a positive climate for learning. Classrooms are bright and pupils' work is attractively displayed. Relationships in lessons are good. Behaviour is managed well because pupils know what is expected of them and know that their contributions to lessons are valued. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and the range of methods and resources used usually gives lessons a lively start. The use of electronic whiteboards and opportunities for discussion and decision making when solving problems also helps to motivate pupils and sustain their interest. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Their skills and experience enable them to deal sensitively with pupils' particular needs. The best practice, however, is not consistent across the whole school. In teachers' marking, for example, the next steps to improvement are not always made clear to pupils and teachers' comments sometimes have to be repeated because pupils do not act on the guidance given. Teachers do not always remind pupils of the lesson objectives in order to help them measure their own progress. In some lessons, planning does not take account of the full range of pupils' abilities in the class. As a result, some groups are either under or over challenged and do not make the progress they should.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and mathematics skills with writing currently a major focus. The curriculum is further enriched by teaching French and a good range of visits and visitors to school, both of which promote

pupils' cultural and personal development well. Provision for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is well established and contributes well to pupils' good behaviour, positive attitudes and healthy lifestyle. Productive links with outside agencies and the programme of social and emotional education mean that pupils are prepared effectively to make sensible decisions about their personal well-being and relationships. The curriculum prepares pupils satisfactorily for the next stage in their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents agree overwhelmingly that their children are well cared for in school. Pupils endorse their parents' views. They say Willow Wood is a safe school and that there are trusting relationships between pupils and staff. Advice and support from the school nurse and police liaison officer make valuable contributions to safeguarding and to pupils' welfare. Pastoral care and support for the most vulnerable pupils and families are very good. Links with parents are strong and the 'family learning' groups strengthen home-school relationships. The school does all it can to promote good attendance and meet attendance targets. A family support worker helps to promote regular attendance by encouraging parents and, in difficult times, brings pupils to school. The school has also built up very strong relationships with the Traveller community. As a result, children from Traveller families are well integrated into the life of the school. Their attendance is improving and they enjoy their learning. Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. Pupils are given good guidance as to their behaviour and relationships. There are good, manageable systems in place for checking on pupils' academic progress. These provide clear information for teachers and a sound basis for setting targets for pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Governors have successfully managed the smooth establishment of the newly amalgamated school. They share the headteacher's clear vision for the school and with the headteacher and staff they have brought about a unity of purpose which is helping to bring about improvements. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are satisfactory, however, improvement is required in the way that pupils' progress is checked. Management roles have been revised. Priorities are set out clearly in the school improvement plan and all staff know how they are accountable for pupils' achievement and standards throughout the school. There is a strong drive to raise standards and to that end, targets are challenging. Leaders work hard to establish the school's role within the community and are successfully drawing groups together for the benefit of pupils and families. There is a growing culture of respect within the local community and an acknowledgement of the school's inclusiveness.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	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
The extent to which 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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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	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	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

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

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you very much for the warm and friendly welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you about your school and your work. We were very impressed with your good behaviour, your politeness and your good manners (and your school lunches!). We were delighted to see that your attendance is improving. This is very important if you are to achieve your best, so do keep it up.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. It helps you to make satisfactory progress in your work, but the standards you reach are not as high as they could be. The grown-ups in school look after you well and take good care of you, and you take good care of each other. You told me you enjoyed your lessons and I agree that your teachers work hard to make them fun. Your headteacher also works hard for you all and because of that, your school is improving.

Your parents, teachers and school governors are proud of your school and want it to be better. To make that happen I have asked your teachers to help you reach higher standards in English and mathematics. Of course, you must work your hardest as well. I have also asked that teachers always plan work at the right level for each of you and make sure you all make the best progress you can. Finally, I have asked that teachers check your progress in all subjects thoroughly, to make sure their plans are really working and that you achieve your very best.