

The Willows School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102460
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	335904
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Charles Hackett

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Edgecombe
Headteacher	Charles Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited seven lessons and observed all six teachers, spending the large majority of his time looking at learning. Meetings were held with staff, governors and the headteacher of a mainstream school supported by the school. The inspector looked at a range of school policies and procedures, data on pupils' achievements, examples of pupils' work and considered the 12 parental questionnaires received.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the curriculum and care arrangements and how they ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils
- the impact of leadership and management on the quality of provision and the development of the school
- the effectiveness with which the three strands of community cohesion are addressed throughout the curriculum.

Information about the school

The Willows takes pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and additional special needs. These include attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, autistic spectrum disorders and challenging behaviour. The school has two learning support units (LSUs) for up to 14 students who are experiencing difficulties in their mainstream school. These pupils are joint-registered for up to three terms before returning full-time to a mainstream school. In addition, the school provides a short-term intervention programme, known as First Steps, for up to eight children aged between three and five. These children spend up to two terms on the programmes before moving to a mainstream school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Willows is an outstanding school for pupils who have previously found being in an educational setting very difficult. Almost all pupils who join the school, either part-time in the First Steps class or LSUs, or full-time in the main school, make outstanding progress. Because of this many can successfully join a mainstream infant school or return to a mainstream primary or secondary school. Only those with significant learning difficulties and disabilities move to a secondary special school. This very positive situation is the direct result of the school's determination to bring about improvements in pupils' behaviour and show them that they can achieve and enjoy learning.

An excellent range of data has been collected on the performance of pupils. This is used effectively to address the specific needs of each child and put in appropriate interventions when needed. It is also used well to inform the development of the school's provision. 'The development of this school is based on facts and figures not anecdotal comments,' is how the chair of governors describes the basis for the school's development. This process ensures that the quality of self-evaluation is extremely good and demonstrates that the school's provision is having a very positive impact on the outcomes for pupils. This, together with evidence that the work of the school is successfully helping pupils remain and do well in mainstream schools, shows that the school has an outstanding capacity for further development.

The data on pupils' achievements and evidence from observing pupils in lessons clearly demonstrate that almost all make outstanding progress. For example, in reading, data show many pupils make rapid progress, even those who only spend two terms in a LSU. Teaching is highly effective because it successfully engages pupils in enjoying learning. A real strength is the consistency shown by teachers and teaching assistants in their expectations for pupils' behaviour. Teachers challenge pupils to do well, putting a strong emphasis on giving them the confidence to work independently. The provision for Early Years Foundation Stage children in First Steps is exemplary. It has a profound impact on their lives and those of their families, enabling children to make exceptional progress in being ready to join a mainstream school.

Throughout each part of the school, the curriculum is very well thought out to ensure pupils receive individual support to improve their basic skills, as well as offer many opportunities to take part in a wide range of memorable activities. These ensure that community cohesion is addressed very well and there is excellent equality of opportunity for pupils to achieve. The very strong links with mainstream schools mean that individual pupils preparing to return full-time are given excellent support to manage the transition back to a school. A key element of this is the practice getting the teaching assistant who is deployed to work with the pupil when back in mainstream to spend

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time at The Willows prior to the pupil's transfer.

The attention given to the individual needs of each pupil is exceptional. Staff look at the whole child and are very well briefed on identifying signs of concern. This ensures pupils are very safe. However, systems for the school to be sure that pupils know how to keep safe are limited. The school is very proactive in seeking high quality support from other agencies, such as social services.

The school is extremely well led by a headteacher who has used his expertise in child development to secure a very strong consistency in the work of the whole staff team. The impact of this is that pupils develop their skills in making the right choices of how to react to different situations. This has resulted in pupils making outstanding progress in improving their behaviour and personal and social skills.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend its systems for knowing that pupils feel safe in the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Almost all pupils enter the school with attainment levels well below national averages. The fact that the attainment of pupils who remain in the school for at least two years is often average or just below by the time they leave is evidence of the outstanding progress they make.

Pupils' outstanding progress is shown in a number of key areas. The most significant is the exceptional rate of progress in literacy. Many pupils who are non-readers on entry become readers in a short time and those reluctant to write become confident to write independently. Many examples of outstanding progress were observed in lessons. For example, in a literacy lesson for lower achievers, a pupil quickly grasped the link between 'a' and 'e' in the same word and by the end of the lesson was writing his own words using these combinations. In a higher-ability literacy lesson, the pupils were able to discuss what was meant by a dilemma and suggest some of their own.

Pupils understand they can talk to a range of staff if they have a problem. They also have the confidence to play a variety of games at break-times. There is good evidence that pupils feel safe, although systems for pupils to show staff they feel safe are limited. Pupils choose healthy options. All enjoy participation in physical activities, and a recent food survey shows an increase in those who choose to eat salads and fruit. The school council meets regularly and minutes of meetings show that pupils make valuable suggestions and contributions to many aspects of the school.

Pupils' behaviour improves dramatically in response to the specialist support they receive. They develop a good understanding of the benefits of making good choices about how they should behave in different situations and consequently the school is a calm, purposeful environment for the vast majority of the time. When incidents do occur, these are quickly resolved and pupils accept a consequence for any misdemeanour.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

A key strength is the excellent quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Each classroom is a very positive learning environment, with an excellent range of up-to-date displays. Many examples of outstanding teaching were observed. These included a literacy lesson in a LSU class where pupils were successfully building up their skills in recognising words with up to four sounds and then using these words in sentences they were writing. Similarly, a higher-ability group of pupils in the main school was planning a short story which would end in a performance to the rest of the school. Their descriptions of different characters showed high levels of imagination and insight. Effective strategies, such as the regular use of individual whiteboards to allow pupils to try out their ideas and answers before committing themselves to writing on paper, work very well, especially given the emotional vulnerability of many pupils. In all lessons, teaching assistants are fully involved in supporting learning and giving prompt affirmations to pupils when they do well. Often this involves an instant sticker pinned on the pupil's sweatshirt, which is later added to the running total and linked to the school's reward system.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Staff have very positive relationships with pupils. They are also very clear in ensuring pupils know what is expected from them and that if these expectations are not met, what the consequences are. These are applied very consistently, which ensures that pupils quickly realise that it is what they do that generates a reward or a consequence. A very effective strategy observed on at least five occasions during the inspection was of staff rewarding pupils for ignoring the negative behaviour of others. The pupils were learning that adult attention comes from meeting expectations rather than behaving inappropriately.

The curriculum is extremely well thought out to meet the needs of pupils. The key element is the focus on literacy. A highly structured approach is taken that involves daily individual and group seminars. The often dramatic improvement in pupils’ reading and writing skills are testament to the positive impact these have. In addition, there is a very strong influence across the curriculum on giving pupils the skills to succeed in a mainstream setting. The extremely high numbers of pupils who move from both First Steps and the LSU groups again shows how effective this is. The thematic approach already used in school to cover subjects other than English and mathematics means the school is very well placed to adopt the new primary curriculum proposed for the future. The school recognises that pupils need support for their emotional development and has adopted daily massage sessions to support this. This is an innovative approach acclaimed nationally for the impact it has on pupils’ personal development.

The care, support and guidance provided for pupils mean that the needs of each individual pupil are given meticulous attention. There are no forms of discrimination. Initial assessments when pupils join the school give staff valuable information on key aspects such as pupils’ attitudes to learning. These are then addressed through activities such as daily circle time and class ‘tea and toast’ sessions. On top of this, the excellent links with the speech and language and play therapists and a counsellor ensure that specialist support is given for a wide range of specific issues.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

This is an extremely well-led school. The headteacher has played a significant part in the evolution of the school from one containing difficult pupils to one that seeks to empower the pupils themselves to take control of their lives and have the skills to make the right choices. Reaching this stage for so many pupils has meant they can return to, and do

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well in, a mainstream environment.

The headteacher’s vision for the school has been fully accepted by staff and has led to staff having the confidence to make decisions and initiate developments themselves. The school has had a positive impact not just on the lives of its own pupils but also on schools in the borough as it has influenced their understanding of the needs of young pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The development of the LSUs has made a huge contribution to this work. These are giving the staff of many schools taking back pupils after being at the unit the skills to work more effectively with pupils who have behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Leadership and management are shared throughout the school; senior staff, including support coordinators, take on their responsibilities very effectively. Governors play their part, giving careful attention to the data presented to them on pupils’ performance to evaluate and amend as necessary the school’s policies. The chair, in particular, knows the school very well and successfully ensures that staff and parent governors have the confidence to make important contributions. Governors also play a key role in working closely with senior staff and pupils to ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is very secure.

Links with parents and carers are very strong. For example, weekly parental groups are well attended and some parents enjoy time in class with their children, working alongside them developing their basic skills. Annual parent/child trips are also very innovative approaches in getting excellent parental understanding of the work of the school.

Community cohesion has been given a very strong emphasis. A very detailed audit and development plan which recognises the context of the local political and religious environment has been created. This ensures that pupils have very good opportunities to learn about their local communities and understand many of the similarities and differences across the world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The First Steps class provides a haven for parents and their child. Its layout, high-quality resources and attention to detail mean that the quality of its provision is exemplary. The unit is extremely well led by its teacher, who is very well supported by two teaching assistants. Observing those children who have been there for a while, it is difficult to understand that when they arrived, they had not been able to benefit from any other form of nursery. The children thoroughly enjoy the many activities, clearly making exceptional progress in all areas of learning. In outside play, children now happily mix with each other and explore together the wide range of equipment available. An example of the excellent progress children make was observed when a child on her first day in the unit refused to stop playing and come for story time. She therefore missed story time and failed to gain a reward sticker. However, by her second day she made it for story time and received her sticker.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the impact it has had on their children. 'This is the first school out of six establishments that has worked on my child's strengths and built his confidence,' is typical of their views. Parents and carers feel very confident they can talk to staff and receive help if needed. 'I have a fantastic relationship with his teacher and headteacher,' wrote one parent. Parents of children in the First Step class stressed that the class has improved their child's behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Willows school to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 39 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	66	4	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	91	1	9	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	58	5	42	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	91	1	9	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	91	1	9	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	91	1	9	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Willows School, Hayes, UB4 9QB

Thank you so much for being so helpful when I visited you recently. I very much enjoyed my time in the school because you all made me very welcome. You were all extremely polite and well behaved.

I can see you enjoy being in school and that all the staff work very hard to help you. Because of this, I judge the school to be outstanding. The quality of teaching and your curriculum are excellent and this means you all achieve very well. You do especially well in improving your reading and writing. The school is excellent at finding out your strengths and weaknesses and using this information to plan how to best help you. Staff work very well with your parents and other agencies to support you.

The school is very well led by your headteacher. He has guided the school to its present outstanding status and developed a staff team who all work together very effectively. Those of you on the school council make very helpful suggestions for improving the school, and the governors also play a valuable role.

To be even better, I have made one small suggestion. The school should extend the ways it knows that you feel safe in school.

Keep working hard and doing your bit to help the school.

Yours sincerely

Charles Hackett

Lead Inspector

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