

Willows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106294
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	336652
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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 of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Preston
Headteacher	Mrs H Foster
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, policies, pupils' books, assessment information, questionnaires returned by pupils and staff and 156 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' attainment and the progress they make as they move up through the school
- the quality of teaching and learning
- the quality and impact of the curriculum on pupils' progress and achievement.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school in which nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. However, the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is well below average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of Nursery and Reception classes. The school has gained the following awards: Primary Quality Mark, Activemark; Healthy Schools Award; Bronze Eco Award and the Local Authority Inclusion Award .

The onsite provision for childcare 'Ready, Steady, Play @The Willows Primary School' was inspected separately and will receive a separate inspection report.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This a good school with several outstanding features. The cornerstones of its success are outstanding care, guidance and support which, allied to meticulous attention to safeguarding, mean that pupils feel exceptionally safe in its nurturing and family-like atmosphere. Relationships throughout the school are very strong with the result that pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy it greatly as seen in their outstanding attendance. Almost all parents and carers are fully supportive of the school because of the strong links that have been forged between home and school. Many parents and carers comment on how much their children enjoy school and how much they appreciate the care the school provides. 'My children love school. They cannot wait for the holidays to be over so that they get back into school,' is a typical comment.

All groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well in their learning because teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Teaching is organised effectively to match tasks to the needs and abilities of different groups. Pupils learn most effectively when working in pairs or small groups when they eagerly bounce ideas off each other. Sometimes, however, they are expected to sit and listen to the teacher for too long, which slows their progress and acts as a brake on the development of their independent learning skills. The developing curriculum based on a themed approach is proving popular with pupils and is adding to their enjoyment. The work on the theme of the Second World War in Year 6 is particularly impressive in developing pupils' literacy, design, historical and artistic skills, for example.

The infectious enthusiasm of the headteacher, who is ably supported by other senior leaders and an outstanding governing body, ensures that there is a sharp focus on finding new ways to improve. For example, attainment in mathematics has improved significantly following the recent introduction of a new teaching programme. The school assesses its own effectiveness accurately and knows what it needs to do to tackle identified weaknesses. For example, leaders and managers are acutely aware that the school needs to do more to promote community cohesion by developing pupils' understanding and appreciation of national and global issues, such as the range of cultures and religions represented in the United Kingdom and abroad. In maintaining the high standards identified at the time of the previous inspection and taking successful action to improve attainment, leaders and managers are demonstrating good capacity to make sure that the school continues its strong performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Make pupils' learning even more effective by providing them with additional opportunities to develop their skills as independent thinkers and learners.
- Improve the school's impact on community cohesion by widening pupils' horizons and deepening their understanding of the range of cultures in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In lessons, pupils' excellent behaviour and their positive attitudes show how eager and willing they are to learn. They enjoy contributing their ideas and answering questions. They are especially adept at working in small groups where they enjoy contributing their own ideas and listening respectfully to the thoughts and ideas of others. From joining the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills generally above those expected for their age, pupils make good progress to attain significantly above average standards by the end of Key Stage 2. In English and science, standards have been consistently, significantly above average. In mathematics, standards are rising rapidly and inspection evidence shows that attainment in Year 6 is now significantly above average in this subject.

Pupils' good academic progress is matched, and in some instances surpassed, by their personal development. Smiling faces testify to how much they enjoy school. It is a pleasure to see how quickly and eagerly they settle to work after break times. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They have a clear sense of right and wrong. They treat others with respect and are welcoming to visitors. They enjoy taking on responsibilities such as by becoming playground leaders. Older pupils are especially effective in helping the younger ones at play and lunchtimes. Pupils know the importance of leading healthy lifestyles. They can say what foods are good for them and which to treat with caution. Large numbers participate in a variety of sports, including football and lacrosse. By the time they leave school, most pupils are confident and articulate young people equipped with the knowledge and skills to allow them to take advantage of their next steps in education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2

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

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	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers prepare lessons well and are using the school's wealth of assessment data increasingly effectively to match the tasks they set to the needs of different groups of pupils. Good relationships in classrooms between adults and pupils ensure that pupils feel valued and encouraged. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that these pupils also make good progress and achieve well. Teaching is at its most effective when it challenges pupils to think through questions for themselves or by working collaboratively with others. This promotes high-quality independent learning skills. However, some teaching relies too much on pupils listening to the teacher rather than allowing them to participate actively. Where this is the case the rate of pupils' learning slows.

Revisions to the school's curriculum, by adding extra emphasis on themes for learning, are proving popular with pupils because it makes what they learn more meaningful and enjoyable. However, this new approach is at a relatively early stage and the full impact on pupils' learning has yet to be felt fully. The school provides a good range of enrichment activities in sport and other aspects such as in the arts, cookery and gardening. There is also a good variety of educational visits which are popular with pupils. The annual school production involves every pupil and is viewed as the highlight of the year by many pupils.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school because they have implicit trust in the adults working with them to help them deal with any problems. 'There is always a member of staff to turn to and we know they'll take us seriously and help us,' is a typical view. Effective arrangements for tracking pupils' progress are in place allowing any problems to be quickly identified and nipped in the bud. Strong links with local high schools ensure that pupils feel confident about moving onto secondary education at the end of Year 6.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>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</p>	
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<p>The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	2
	2
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	2
<p>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</p>	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong and dynamic leadership. This ensures that the school does not stand still and that concentrating on improvement and driving the school forward are firmly embedded. Leaders and managers at all levels are strongly committed to promoting equality and tackling any discrimination. Their effectiveness and impact are seen in the good and improving achievement of all pupils regardless of background, ability or gender. Leadership takes its responsibilities towards safeguarding pupils exceptionally seriously. All statutory obligations are in place. Attention to health and safety, such as the production of comprehensive risk assessments, is meticulous. Pupils are aware of the importance of personal safety and are encouraged to be vigilant at all times. Leaders and managers promote community cohesion effectively within school and the local community by encouraging pupils to take on responsibilities and become active fundraisers for charities. However, opportunities for pupils to investigate and appreciate wider community issues both nationally and internationally are at a very early stage of development. Governors play a pivotal role in the success of the school. They are knowledgeable and ready to ask the necessary questions to hold the school rigorously to account when necessary. They take their responsibilities exceptionally seriously.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<p>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning</p>	2
	2
<p>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</p>	1
<p>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</p>	1
<p>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</p>	2
<p>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</p>	2
<p>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</p>	1
<p>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</p>	3

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

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good leadership and management ensure that children work and play in an attractive and purposeful environment where each child is known as an individual. There is a good range of activities for children with a good balance between those that are teacher led and those that children choose themselves. Good systems to track children's progress are in place but their use is only satisfactory in making sure that planning to meet individual children's needs are met. The Early Years Foundation Stage is effective in making sure that children develop enquiring minds and in laying firm foundations for their future learning. Staff are especially effective in promoting children's literacy skills with the result that attainment in communication, language and literacy is well above age-related expectations by the time they enter Key Stage 1. Parents and carers are informed regularly about their children's progress. Good links with outside agencies ensure that specialist support is called upon quickly to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a very high return of questionnaires from parents and carers. Almost all were supportive of all aspects of the school's work and inspectors agree with their positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Willows Primary 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 inspection team received 156 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	122	78	32	21	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	126	81	29	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	81	52	74	47	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	44	81	52	6	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	93	60	62	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	76	49	73	47	6	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	100	64	53	34	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)	102	65	50	32	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	90	58	56	36	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	80	51	66	42	6	4	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	76	49	76	49	3	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	122	78	33	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	122	78	33	21	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.



09 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willows Primary School, Altrincham, WA15 6PP

Thank you for your warm welcome when I came to inspect your school. It was good to talk to many of you. I was impressed with your readiness to talk about your school. You will be pleased to know that you go to a good school which does several things outstandingly well. I was very impressed with how polite you are and how well you behave. I was also very impressed with your excellent attendance – well done! You told me how much you enjoy school and how safe you feel and I can see why. Your school takes exceptionally good care of you and your safety.

You make good progress in your learning because the teaching you receive is good. It was a pleasure to see you enjoying lessons, especially when you work together in groups and in pairs. The Year 6 assembly on the Second World War was very good and showed how much you are learning in the topic work you are doing. Your headteacher and all the adults in the school work very hard to make sure that you enjoy your education. It was pleasing to see how positively you react to all their efforts.

In order to make your school even better, I am asking it to do two things.

- Make sure that you get more opportunities to be active in lessons so that you can learn independently from your teacher.
- Give you more opportunities to study and understand issues of society and religion both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

I am confident that your positive attitudes will make sure that your school goes from strength to strength in the coming years.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Stephen Wall

Lead Inspector

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