

Willow Dene School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133399
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	341384
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2010
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

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	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard O'Connor
Headteacher	Louise Carlyle
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 18 lessons, seeing 17 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, members of the senior management team and others with posts of responsibility, including the subject leaders for English, mathematics, information and communication technology and personal, social and health education. In addition, meetings were held with the Chair of the governing body and the governors with responsibility for safeguarding and special educational needs and/or disabilities. An inspector also met with a small group of older pupils. The inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, their progress files, and teachers' planning and assessment records. The lead inspector analysed questionnaires from 58 parents and carers, 13 pupils and 59 staff.

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

- the progress and achievement of all groups of pupils over time across the school
- whether teaching is sufficiently challenging for all pupils in enabling them to make the best progress possible
- the full picture of attendance and authorised and unauthorised absence of all pupils over time
- the effectiveness of leadership and management across the school.

Information about the school

Willow Dene is an above average size primary special school and is the only one of its kind in the borough. It caters for children and pupils with a wide range of learning disabilities. All have a statement of special educational needs. Approximately 45 per cent are for autistic spectrum disorders, 28 per cent for severe learning difficulties, 18 per cent for profound and multiple learning difficulties and approximately 6 per cent for complex medical needs. Regular medical intervention is required for 37 per cent of children and pupils. Boys outnumber girls by over two to one. Almost 42 per cent are of White British heritage and 30 per cent of Black African heritage, the remainder being from a range other ethnic minority groups reflecting the makeup of the borough. Almost a quarter speak English as an additional language and there are 17 community languages spoken by parents and carers. The proportion of children and pupils known to be eligible for free schools meals is high at 47 per cent.

The school provides an outreach service called the Support Team for Education in Primary Schools, offering a wide range of support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in mainstream schools in the borough, plus specialist teaching for those with dyslexia. There is an independently run nursery school on the same site. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Willow Dene provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It meets its core aim of working collaboratively to provide a child-centred approach through motivating and challenging experiences. The dedicated and committed staff ensure pupils are treated at all times with dignity and respect, having their best interests at heart. A significant strength of the school is the excellent collaborative working with an extensive range of other professionals and specialist organisations, which promotes pupils' well-being and learning particularly well. This includes specialist on-site support services and the highly effective outreach team, working with and supporting pupils and staff in mainstream schools. The good level of effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is a further strength of the school. The school works hard and successfully to engage parents and carers and keeps them informed fully of their child's progress. Consequently, they are appreciative of the school's work. One wrote, 'My child has come on leaps and bounds since starting last year. The staff are happy and prompt to help me support my child's learning and life skills – an attitude found throughout the school from top to bottom.'

Pupils' progress over time is satisfactory. Whole-school assessment procedures and the tracking of pupils' progress now have more rigour but still lack sharpness in identifying how well pupils make progress in relation to their starting points. Although there is a great deal of information on the progress of individuals, there is insufficient analysis and use of this to inform future strategies, for instance for improving teaching and learning further. Pupils do, however, enjoy their learning. This was particularly evident in the palpable delight shown on the faces of mixed-aged Key Stage 2 pupils watching a DVD about different types of puppets. This supported their planning for making their own stick puppets and underpinned their enthusiasm for this activity.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers' careful planning, related well to the individual needs of pupils, ensures these are generally met through a variety of challenging activities. However, though the curriculum has strengths in supporting pupils' sensory, physical and communication skills well, the school recognises that it does not meet fully the needs of the increasing number of pupils joining the school with more complex needs. Good quality care, guidance and support help each pupil, including the most vulnerable, in very specific ways and ensure they are all looked after in a safe, healthy and caring environment.

Recent whole-school developments have included effective new initiatives with a focus on improving physical development, for example, through Move Opportunities Via Education sessions for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and a focus on delivering a sensory curriculum. School leaders have rightly identified a need to focus on improving assessment procedures and to review the curriculum, but the impact is not

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yet evident. However, senior leadership is not enabling enough rigour in whole-school self-evaluation, which impacts on the sharpness of the strategic vision for the direction of the school. Currently, there is insufficient focus on involving staff at all levels in identifying the impact of the school's work, identifying key priorities for development and improving further the quality of pupils' achievement and progress. Because of this, governors are not as robust as they could be in their role as a critical and supportive friend of the school. In light of these points, the school's capacity for sustained improvement and moving the school onwards and upwards is currently only satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Apply more rigour to whole-school self-evaluation, involving staff at all levels, in order to:
 - identify clearly the impact of all the school's work
 - identify priorities for improvement, particularly in relation to improving further pupils' achievement and progress
 - work with the governing body to strengthen their understanding of the school's work.
- Analyse and use assessment data to inform future strategies for teaching and learning.
- Ensure the curriculum meets fully the needs of the increasing number of pupils joining the school with complex special needs, including autistic spectrum disorders.
- About 40% of schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

As a result of the calm support from all adults in the school, pupils are safe, persevere well in lessons, develop their independence and many are developing well their capacity to make informed choices. One pupil told an inspector, 'I feel safe because staff look after me. I am with people that I know.' Some pupils with physical disabilities are particularly independent, showing great delight, as well as care, in manoeuvring their battery-powered wheelchairs around the school.

Classes are grouped in relation to pupils' special needs. Here they benefit greatly from working in small groups or at individual work stations where they receive focused attention and support. In a Key Stage 2 religious education lesson, pupils were developing well their knowledge and understanding of features of Christian churches and at the end were able to show what they had learned in response to the questions asked of them. The use of a variety of new technologies and Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) visual symbol cards also supports pupils' learning effectively throughout the day, all of which is regarded as learning time. However, while pupils often make good progress in individual lessons, their progress over time is only satisfactory because assessment is not always used effectively to ensure their needs are

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met.

As well as being enabled to eat healthily and develop their understanding of this, depending on their specific dietary needs, pupils participate in a wide range of physical activities during the school day. These include 'power walks' at the start of the day, formal physical education lessons, and enrichment activities off-site, as well as inter-school sporting competitions. The school's work in this respect has been recognised by the Healthy Schools award. As a consequence of pupils' good behaviour, a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere is the norm in lessons. Pupils respond really well to sensitive intervention from adults. In a morning session in the 'ball pool', a class of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders benefitted greatly from this, settling well for their next activity. Pupils take an active part in the life of the school by contributing to charitable causes and by taking part in the annual reviews of their progress, much of which is recorded on DVDs to enable all to see visual evidence of progress. There are also numerous visits within the local community, which adds to pupils' learning experiences. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good. They work well together in lessons and are sensitive to the needs of one another.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

The collaborative approach and teamwork of all adults in lessons, as well as around the school, underpins the quality of teaching and progress made by pupils, which in some lessons is particularly good. Behaviour management is good. In a Key Stage 2 design and technology lesson for a group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the teacher's lively approach in enabling pupils to take turns and make choices as to which brightly coloured parts of the body could be used to design an alien resulted in lots of smiles, recognition and positive reactions. On occasion, however, some support staff provide answers too soon for pupils because they do not allow them sufficient time to respond. This then compromises accurate assessment as to how well pupils are progressing. Sometimes the introductory activity in lessons goes on for too long, which means some pupils are too inactive. Staff offer praise and encouragement as appropriate, helping pupils to make progress.

The satisfactory curriculum supports pupils' personal development well and ensures their entitlement to the National Curriculum. Pupils benefit greatly from a range of practical activities such as food technology, design technology, arts, music, dance and physical education. The on-site mobile swimming pool provided this term as part of a scheme linked to the preparations for the 2012 Summer Olympic Games has been used by pupils and the local community. A broad range of enrichment activities, involving activities in the community, enlivens learning and has resulted in sporting success and a young citizens' award for pupils. Links to a school in Australia have involved one class becoming penpals who communicate with one another through both new technologies and traditional postal services. However, the proportion of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and/or complex needs has increased since the last inspection, and the curriculum has not been suitably adapted to ensure their needs are fully met.

Pupils' health and well-being are at the forefront of the school's strong ethos of care. The appointment of a family support worker has been an important addition to the staff in this respect. Pupils' medical and physical needs also have a high priority throughout the day, school staff are appropriately trained as well as being supported very well by nurses and other specialist staff. A carefully managed and executed programme of annual reviews is effective in supporting pupils as they move through the school, and when they leave for the next stage of their education. Procedures for raising attendance rates have improved the overall average and have resulted in minimal unauthorised absence. When necessary, those who cannot attend school as a result of illness are supported at home by the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching

Taking into account:

The use of assessment to support learning

3

3

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff with positions of responsibility at all levels lead and manage their remits effectively as a result of their individual expertise and experience. However, their work is not evaluated sufficiently well in terms of the 'bigger picture' and the impact it is having on the work of the school as a whole. Consequently, this limits the efficacy of the whole-school strategic vision and planning. Notwithstanding this, the school is effective in ensuring that all have equality of opportunity, as it is in tackling any discrimination, which results in a good ethos for inclusion and no underachievement of any particular group of pupils. The governors and the school work well together to ensure safeguarding procedures and practices are effective and reflect current good practice. This also underpins the school's good care, guidance and support for pupils. Curriculum planning and the broad range of opportunities available for pupils underpin the school's good promotion of community cohesion within the school itself, in the locality and beyond. This contributes well to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and a harmonious school community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

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

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At the heart of this good provision are the in-depth initial assessments, in partnership with parents, which inform the individual programmes for the unique challenges facing each child, including for the increasing number of those with complex needs. Well-pitched expectations underpin the good teaching. A good range of communication devices facilitates effective communication with the children. In addition, a broad range of multi-sensory resources enliven learning well. As a result, children make good progress in lessons in relation to the early learning goals. In one activity, a child's growing confidence and independence was shown when putting on an apron independently in preparation for 'messy' play. Enjoyable learning was also evident when children were given the free choice of brushes or rollers and colours to paint a water and boat scene as a record of the previous day's visit to the park, which had included a boat ride. Assisted seating and soft table tops ensured all children's inclusion in this painting activity and enhanced their enjoyment further. Free flow of activities between indoor and outdoor activities adds further breadth to children's learning during the day. Consequently, by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, they achieve well, particularly in their independence, responsiveness, communication skills and readiness to learn. Leaders agree there are, however, insufficient planned opportunities for children to explore number operations and that resources to enable children to solve simple problems need improvement. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and meets statutory requirements.

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

All parents and carers who returned the questionnaires are happy with their child's experience at the school. In particular, they believe the school keeps their children safe, that they are well informed of the progress their children make, that the teaching is good and the school meets their children's particular needs. This inspection broadly confirms these views, although teaching is satisfactory rather than good. There were very few negative responses and no discernable pattern of discontent was evident.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Willow Dene 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 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 159 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	66	20	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	72	16	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	43	74	15	26	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	66	19	33	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	71	16	28	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	59	22	38	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	53	25	43	2	3	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)	33	57	21	36	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	69	18	31	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	55	26	45	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	55	25	43	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	35	60	22	38	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	76	14	24	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



16 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willow Dene School, London SE18 2JD

Not so long ago, three of us came to your school to see how well you are getting on and whether we could suggest anything to make things even better for you. We really enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around the school, and being able to have a formal chat with a small group of you. We liked the way you welcomed us and your friendly attitudes. A particular thanks to Aqua class who presented us with sample of their Spanish cakes, made as part of their 'Foods from around the World' project. They were very tasty! Lots of smiling faces on arrival and throughout the day, and fond farewells when leaving, showed us that you really enjoy what you do in school. We decided your school is satisfactory overall because:

- the school works really well with lots of other people to support you
- you make good progress in lots of aspects of your personal development
- you behave well in lessons and around the school
- you get on well with each other and all the adults who work in the school
- the staff care for you well and make sure you are safe
- in lessons, teachers and other adults give you lots of help and support
- the school makes sure there are lots of exciting things for you to do.

We think the school could be better and help improve your learning even more.

Therefore, we have asked the headteacher to:

- check how well the school is doing to help it plan future improvements
- use the assessment information it has about you to meet your particular needs
- make sure the curriculum lets all of you learn as well as you can.

Finally, we enjoyed our time at the school as well!

Yours sincerely

James Bowden

Lead Inspector

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