

# Willowcroft Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135159
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	345587
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Sanderson HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	231
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Malcolm Wright
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jon Gray
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Mereland Road Didcot Oxfordshire OX11 8BA
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 part lessons, observing 11 teachers. They held meetings with the chair of governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, policy documents, pupils' books, 30 parental questionnaires, and staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

- whether teaching and learning are sufficiently strong across all year groups to ensure that pupils make good progress
- how effectively teachers plan lessons containing engaging activities that actively involve pupils in learning, are delivered at a good pace and provide challenge for all pupils
- whether the care, guidance and support of pupils is a strength of the school
- how effectively leaders and managers at all levels in the school take effective and consistent action to raise standards.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school that opened in September 2007 under the Fresh Start initiative. The number of pupils on roll in the school has decreased since it opened. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery with children taught alongside those in Reception. The large majority of pupils are of White British background and the number of pupils whose first language is not English is low for a school of this size. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The most commonly identified need relates to emotional and behavioural difficulties. Governors manage the out of school provision which offers breakfast and after-school clubs. These were inspected at the same time as the main 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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Willowcroft Community School provides a good education for its pupils. The very good leadership of the headteacher, combined with the effective support of senior leaders and the local authority, has moved the school forward positively since it opened nearly three years ago. A key strength of the school is the outstanding care, guidance and support staff provide for pupils. Those facing barriers to their learning receive extremely well targeted support. Pupils appreciate the high levels of care they receive and say they feel safe in school. They behave well and display positive attitudes to their learning. The school has created a welcoming and inclusive environment for all pupils, who respond by making a good contribution to the school and wider community. The overwhelming majority of pupils say they enjoy school and this is confirmed by the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The large majority of lessons proceed at a good pace and contain interesting, engaging activities, pitched at the right levels for the ability of pupils in the class. However, this good practice is not yet consistently in place across the school. Good teaching and a creative and imaginative curriculum ensures that pupils make good progress in their learning. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. By the end of Year 6, pupils are attaining standards similar to the national average.

The importance attached to pupils' well-being is reflected in the good quality of the before- and after-school clubs. Pupils enjoy attending these clubs and are happy and settled in their welcoming environment. These settings are secure and there are well-established procedures for the safeguarding of children.

The strong drive and ambition of the headteacher and leadership team to improve learning are enhanced by good and effective partnerships with parents and carers, the community and local agencies. Good systems of monitoring and evaluation ensure that leaders are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The quality of the plans to address areas in need of improvement, combined with the leadership team's good track record in improving behaviour and teaching, indicate the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching in order to further raise pupils' attainment by:

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- ensuring that all teachers make effective use of data to plan and deliver lessons that are sufficiently challenging for all pupils
- ensuring that all teachers use a range of teaching styles so that pupils are inspired and fully engaged by lesson activities
- ensuring that all lessons are delivered at a good pace
- providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in their work across different subjects
- continuing to develop effective strategies to share the best teaching and learning practice in the school.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils learn and achieve well in lessons. They respond positively to the challenges set by their teachers and show good levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning. In lessons, they are keen to answer questions and to share their ideas with others. They become fully involved in activities and the great majority work responsibly on their own or in small groups. All groups of pupils make good progress in their learning, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, there is variation in the standards attained by different year groups which reflects the level of their skills when they joined the school. Year 6 pupils attained standards similar to the national average in 2009 and school tracking data and inspection evidence indicate that current Year 6 pupils are on target to attain standards similar to the national average this summer.

Good behaviour in lessons and around the school means there is an atmosphere where learning is valued. Attendance is average and improving as a result of the effective measures taken by the school including improved links with parents and carers. Pupils have a number of opportunities to undertake responsibilities around school through, for example, their effective school council and 'eco council' and as playground leaders. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthily and safely and a number are involved in the wide range of sporting activities offered by the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and they are open, welcoming and confident with visitors. Pupils' very well developed social skills, and adequate basic skills, equip them satisfactorily for future life.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

### How effective is the provision?

In all the lessons observed during this inspection, there were positive relationships between teachers and pupils. The learning objectives of lessons were made clear to pupils and teachers made sure that pupils understood what they had to do in order to be successful in the lesson.

The following are the features seen in the good lessons observed by inspectors:

- lessons are well planned and contain a range of active, engaging activities
- assessment information is used well to ensure that the work set meets the needs of the different abilities of pupils in the class
- lessons are delivered at a good pace and no time is wasted
- teachers make effective use of targeted questioning to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding well
- pupils are given opportunities to explain and develop their thinking and learning.

Although the large majority of the teaching in the school is of this standard, this is not consistently the case. In a few lessons, activities do not fully engage pupils, are not pitched closely enough to pupils' level of ability, or the pace of learning is not fast enough. In these lessons, pupils make satisfactory progress.

The practical, creative and lively curriculum is capturing pupils' enthusiasm for learning and contributes much to their personal development, improving attendance and good behaviour. Pupils say there are many interesting things for them to do such as regular trips to the 'Forest School'. The development of pupils' literacy skills is a key element of the curriculum and good intervention and booster programmes are in place to help the learning of those pupils who need additional support with reading and

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writing. Although pupils have satisfactory ICT skills, these are not yet fully embedded across the curriculum and used to enhance learning in other subjects. The curriculum is enriched by many after-school clubs, homework projects that involve parents and carers working with their children, and links with schools in Europe and Uganda.

Care is central to the school's ethos. Staff know and look after pupils extremely well. Those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive excellent support. Teaching assistants play an important role in providing extra well-targeted support for these pupils. The school's particular strength is the partnership it builds with parents and carers and the outstanding way in which other services are involved in supporting pupils in need.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction for the school that is focused on raising achievement, improving teaching and learning, and promoting the importance of success for all pupils. Systems of monitoring and evaluation are robust and good plans are in place to drive further improvement. Equality for all pupils and the promotion of diversity are given a high priority by the school. The progress of all groups of pupils is tracked and evaluated well. Effective action taken by school leaders ensures that all groups of pupils make similar, good progress. The headteacher has extended leadership and management roles to involve more teachers in decision making and in taking specific responsibilities. The role of subject leadership is developing well, and core subjects are led effectively. However, high quality leadership of all subject areas has yet to be fully established. Governors support the school well, ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met and provide good and effective challenge to the school's leadership team.

Senior leaders have ensured that very effective safeguarding procedures are in place. These include robust risk assessments of the premises and equipment, a clear policy on child protection that is well understood by all staff, and a very careful record of checks made on adults working in the school. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Pupils have a good understanding of cultures other than their own through good international links and developing links with other schools.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are below those normally expected for their age. From their starting points, they make good progress, particularly in personal, social and emotional development, and as a result, their behaviour is exceptionally good. Skills in language and problem solving are developing well because of regular interaction with staff. Adults engage children in conversation regularly, use gestures and good facial expressions to make meaning clear and support children's development with appropriate signing. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. There is a clear vision for the development of the provision backed up by a carefully devised action plan. Parents and carers are welcome in the setting and opportunities are offered for them to be engaged and involved in their child's learning.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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



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### Views of parents and carers

The school's good work to engage parents and carers means that the very large majority expressed their support for the school. A small number of parents and carers expressed concern about the behaviour of a few pupils in the school. Inspectors judged the behaviour of the large majority of pupils to be good both in lessons and around the school. A small minority of pupils do at times exhibit challenging behaviour but this is well managed by staff.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Willowcroft Community 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 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 231 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	67	10	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	57	13	43	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	47	13	43	2	7	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	43	13	43	2	7	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	15	50	13	43	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	37	17	57	0	0	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	37	19	63	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)	7	23	19	63	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	37	17	57	2	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	33	12	40	3	10	2	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	20	21	70	1	3	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	12	40	14	47	2	7	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	67	9	30	0	0	1	3

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



12 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willowcroft Community School, Didcot OX11 8BA

Thank you very much for being so welcoming and friendly towards us during our recent visit to your school. We very much enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you and your teachers about how well you are doing. Now that we have finished the inspection, I am writing to tell you of our findings. Your school provides you with a good education. The main strengths of the school are shown below.

- Your headteacher leads the school very well. He wants the very best for all of you and other senior teachers give him good support.
- Your school has a welcoming, friendly ethos. You enjoy school and the vast majority of you behave well in lessons and around the school.
- You are taught well and are making good progress in your learning.
- You are exceptionally well cared for and supported by staff. This ensures that you feel very safe in school.
- You have a number of opportunities to take on responsibility through, for example, being involved in the school council, 'eco council' or becoming a playground leader.
- You are provided with many interesting things to do such as trips to the 'Forest School' and the opportunity to be involved in a range of after-school clubs.

Although your school is good, there are some things that could make it even better.

In many of your lessons, you are given interesting activities to do that challenge all of you and no time is wasted. We have asked the leadership team to ensure that all of your lessons are like this.

I have visited your school a few times now and I shall miss coming to see you again, but I am sure that you will all continue to do your best.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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