

The Willows CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125681
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	293327
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Tom Shine

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Orion Johnson
Headteacher	Janis McBride
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2002
School address	The Willows North Alcester Road Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 9QN
Telephone number	01789 205811
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average school with pupils from varied social and economic backgrounds. An increasing number of pupils of Eastern European origin join Reception with little or no English. The school admits up to 40 pupils each year, resulting in most classes containing mixed-age groupings. There are privately run facilities on site such as a breakfast club and an after-school club. The headteacher was appointed in January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Most parents are very supportive of this good school and rightly appreciate what it provides for their children. 'The school has a lovely family feel to it' and 'The staff are friendly and are very good at bringing out individual skills in children' are some of the positive comments which reflect the views of many parents. The headteacher provides good leadership and, together with other senior staff, drives improvement forward. The Foundation Stage provides a good start to the pupils' education. The overall quality of provision, including teaching, is good. As a result, pupils achieve well in relation to their broadly average starting points. Standards are improving and are above average in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve better in reading than writing. As they progress through the school, pupils with learning difficulties are supported well. Consequently they make good progress and achieve well.

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and are particularly strong in the Reception Year. Teachers plan tasks and activities matched well to individual children's needs, enabling them to enjoy their learning and to make a very good start to their education. In the rest of the school, teachers plan lessons well and use their knowledge of each pupil to set suitably challenging work. Throughout the school, teachers work in effective partnership with capable support staff to ensure the specific needs of individual pupils are met well.

Pupils enjoy coming to this friendly school. They say they are 'always listened to' and like their teachers, who they think are 'quite caring'. The curriculum is good and one of the aspects that greatly appeals to pupils is 'the great variety of lessons' and the range of other activities. The school provides well for the development of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT). In English, while pupils achieve well, they could do better in writing if they were encouraged to write more at length and were given more opportunities to practise their writing skills when studying other subjects.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils say they feel safe and are aware of the procedures to keep them secure. They also have a good awareness of the importance of exercise and keeping fit and are knowledgeable about the importance of eating healthily. Many pupils say they enjoy eating fruit and vegetables. The school provides good care, guidance and support for its pupils, including those with learning difficulties. As a result, all pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. The small proportion of children learning English as an additional language are supported very effectively.

Management of the school is good. The headteacher and senior staff work together effectively in their roles, and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a result, the school's capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of pupils' writing throughout the school by providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills and to use them in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and attain above-average standards. Children enter the Reception Year with broadly expected skills in most areas. A small but increasing number of children enter the school

with below-average skills in communication, language and literacy and in their personal and social development. All children, including those with learning difficulties and English as an additional language, make good progress as they are very well supported and, by the time they leave the Reception Year, their levels of attainment are broadly in line with those expected for their ages in all areas of learning. Taken together, the results of the national assessments in Year 2 over recent years have been slightly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In recent years, standards in Year 6 have improved steadily. They were above average in 2006 in English, mathematics and science. Current work in the school shows these good standards have been sustained in all three subjects. Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress. Standards in English would be even higher if pupils were given more opportunities to practise their writing skills and to write at length in other subjects. In their science books, for example, there are instances of older pupils being asked to copy the same piece of text rather than interpret it in their own words.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and an awareness of the needs and feelings of others. From their earliest days in the Reception Year, they develop a good understanding of school rules. Pupils are very polite and well behaved in and around the school. They relate well to members of staff and to one another. As a result, they are keen to come to school and their attendance is good. Pupils take responsibility well. For example, they acquire skills as trainee buddies and look after younger children during break times. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Members of the school council, for example, take their responsibilities very seriously, raising money for additional play equipment and liaising closely with the Parent Teacher Association. Pupils listen attentively to visiting speakers, such as local church leaders and community police officers. Pupils' good social skills, together with their good skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, prepare them well for the next stage of their education and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan well and systematically build on pupils' previous learning. They have good relationships with their pupils and manage their classes very well. Pupils respond to challenges and find learning fun. Teachers present their good subject knowledge confidently and in interesting ways. As a result, pupils listen well, have very good attitudes to learning and are keen to do their best. They are able to concentrate for relatively long periods of time. Teaching assistants work well with the teachers and do a good job in supporting particular pupils, such as those who find learning difficult. Just occasionally the standard of teachers' marking slips below the generally good quality set by most teachers.

Teaching is very good in the Foundation Stage. Teachers and support staff monitor the progress of all children carefully and tailor work set to their individual needs. All staff are very mindful of meeting fully the needs of the small group of children in the early stages of learning English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum provides every child with a wide range of experiences, helping to ensure that they enjoy school. Creativity is fostered well and pupils produce good work in art and music. In the Reception class, adults make good use of both the indoors and outdoors to meet differing needs. Here, the good curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of the children learning English as an additional language. In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum is carefully planned to take account of pupils' interests and aptitudes. The school is working hard to establish closer links between different subjects. This is having a positive effect by making learning more purposeful, although pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their literacy skills, particularly writing, in different subjects, or to write extended pieces. This slows pupils' progress in writing. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs, visits and visitors that enhance learning. For example, a visit from the local drugs' awareness unit extended pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Pupils are pleased that they are able to experience a foreign language because 'it helps us when we go to secondary school'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school gives its pupils good care, guidance and support, a view endorsed by the overwhelming majority of parents. Pupils like and respect their teachers and support staff. Arrangements for pupils' personal development and well-being and health and safety, including child protection, are good. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified at an early stage on their entry to the Reception Year and good help and advice are given by teachers and support staff. The small number of children at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are integrated well into school life. Staff are trained and aware of the need to identify potentially vulnerable pupils. Good links with other agencies ensure such pupils are monitored closely and their specific needs met. Rigorous systems for monitoring, assessing and guiding pupils' learning are in place. Pupils are clear about their targets and have a good understanding about what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership team has an accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and this has resulted in the school improving significantly since the arrival of the current headteacher. Under her strong leadership the staff work together well with a shared commitment to improvement. The headteacher has introduced rigorous school self-evaluation procedures from which flow priorities for school improvements. These include robust procedures for checking on the quality of teaching, and, as a result, there is a good awareness of where improvements need to be made. The leadership team know that the key to achieving even higher standards in English depends on raising standards in writing by providing opportunities for pupils to write at length and to use their writing skills more in other subjects. Governors are supportive, although in many cases inexperienced, and are keen to develop their expertise through further training. They are becoming more aware of their role in monitoring the performance of the school and calling it to account.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A**Leadership and management**

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Willows C of E Primary School, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 9QN

Thank you very much for all the help you gave to us when we came to your school recently. We liked talking to you and to your teachers and coming to your assemblies. Your school provides you with a good education. You are making good progress because you are well taught.

These are the things we liked most about your school.

- You make a good start to your education in the Reception class.
- You achieve well in English, mathematics and science.
- You are all very friendly and polite.
- You are very well cared for and you told us you feel safe and well supported.
- Your headteacher, who leads the school well, makes sure that those of you who need extra help get it.
- You enjoy school and attend regularly.
- You behave well and get on well with each other and with all members of staff.
- You have a good understanding of the importance of exercise and healthy eating.
- You enjoy the range of out-of-school activities and clubs.

This is what we think could be better.

- We think your teachers could give you more opportunities to improve your writing skills.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and do your best.

We really enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn, and wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Tom Shine Lead inspector