

# The Willows School and Early Years Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	110379
<b>Local authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	378091
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Lynn Alexander

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>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	177
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Hrycak
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jo Orbell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Fishermead Boulevard Fishermead Milton Keynes MK6 2LP
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<b>Age group</b>	3–7
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	8–9 March 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	378091



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Lynn Alexander

Additional inspector

Richard Sutton

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Ten lessons were seen and inspectors made short observations of pupils engaged in group work, heard pupils read and observed an assembly. Seven teachers were observed over a period of six hours. In addition, meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher and deputy headteacher and staff. There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its self-evaluation documents and plans for improvement, the data collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding information and the minutes of governing body meetings. They considered the responses in 25 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers and 14 received from staff.

## Information about the school

The Willows School and Early Years Centre is smaller than the average primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides 78 part-time places in the Nursery and 45 full-time places in the Reception year. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average, as is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below the national average. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average. There is a breakfast club that is managed by the governing body; the governing body also manages a local Children's Centre that was inspected separately in March 2011. The site is shared with a privately run childcare provision which is subject to a separate inspection. At the time of the inspection, the senior leadership team consisted of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Both were serving in an interim capacity and three other teachers were new to the 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. The relationships between adults and pupils are good and pupils from different backgrounds get on well together, reflecting the good promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Almost every parent and carer who responded to the survey said they would recommend the school to another parent. The school is not good because the majority of teaching is no more than satisfactory.
- Pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. When they leave the school at the end of Year 2 their skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics are broadly in line with national averages.
- Teachers make lesson intentions clear and pupils’ learning is well supported by teaching assistants. However, teachers’ feedback and marking do not always give pupils clear guidance on what to do to improve their work. Sometimes lessons lack pace and appropriate challenge so that pupils, including the more able, do not deepen their knowledge or develop their skills quickly enough. This is particularly evident in the teaching of writing.
- Pupils’ behaviour is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and to others and say they feel safe at school. Pupils speak knowledgeably about all forms of bullying and say it is very rare in their school. Their parents and carers share this view and inspectors agree.
- Senior leaders and the governing body set clear priorities for the school. They have introduced a curriculum that meets the interests, needs and aptitudes of pupils. Senior leaders’ lesson observations have accurately identified points for development in teaching which have resulted in improvements in pupils’ progress and in teachers’ performance. However, not all staff and governors are yet fully involved in the regular monitoring of pupils’ achievement.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
  - ensuring that lessons provide appropriate challenge, rigour and expectation for all groups of pupils, including the more able
  - establishing a consistently effective approach to marking and feedback across the school which ensures that pupils understand how to improve their work and are given time to respond.
- Raise pupils' attainment in writing by:
  - employing a systematic approach to the teaching and assessment of writing across the school
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to write across all areas of the curriculum.
- Embed recent improvements to the tracking of pupils' progress and ensure that all staff and governors are involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions to improve the achievement of pupils.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their personal development and in communication, reading and mathematics and satisfactory progress in writing. By the end of their Reception Year, most children's skills are broadly in line with those expected for their age.

This start to pupils' learning is built on satisfactorily in Key Stage 1 so that their attainment when they leave the school is broadly in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Lesson observations during inspection and the school's tracking data for progress in reading confirm that there are effective strategies for the teaching of phonics (letters and their sounds). For example, pupils can distinguish between sounds at the start of a word and spell words using the skills taught in the lesson. Pupils read to inspectors with confidence and demonstrated the ability to use their phonic skills. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils meet the standards expected in reading. A focused approach to the teaching of mathematics has improved achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection. Consequently, as pupils move to Key Stage 1, they are better able to solve mathematical problems and use mathematical vocabulary. In a lesson in the Nursery, children were able to match numerals and objects; in Year 2, pupils could use a range of mathematical operations to solve word problems. However, the achievement of pupils currently in the school is higher in reading and mathematics than it is in writing. This is because there is insufficient rigour and consistency in teachers' planning and strategies and in their marking of pupils' written work. Therefore, pupils do not always know what to do to improve their work or have the opportunity to correct it. Consequently they repeat errors and their progress slows.

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Boys and girls achieve at similar levels to their peers in other schools nationally in mathematics. Girls achieve slightly higher results than boys in reading and writing, but because the school rectifies quickly any area of identified underachievement, the gap is narrowing. Pupils who speak English as an additional language reach higher levels than their counterparts in other schools. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make satisfactory progress overall. The careful induction and assessment of pupils who join the school during the school year ensure that they make a satisfactory start. The vast majority of parents and carers are positive about the progress their children make. School data show that the majority of pupils who stay at the school from Nursery until the end of Year 2 make at least satisfactory, and often better, progress.

### **Quality of teaching**

Pupils enjoy their work and settle to it well. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children were keen to work collaboratively to build a home for an alien. In Key Stage 1, pupils talked with enthusiasm about how they could read words on a poster and set about making their own. The curriculum provides stimulating themes that appeal to the interests and aptitudes of pupils. It provides well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, the teaching of writing is of inconsistent quality and, although adaptations have been made recently, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their writing across the curriculum.

The main focus of lessons is made clear. Teachers and teaching assistants work in effective partnership to plan timely and appropriate strategies to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Teaching assistants are well trained and enthusiastic. They make a significant contribution to support for most groups of pupils. However, teachers do not always identify what pupils at higher levels of ability are expected to learn. As a result, more-able pupils are not always provided with challenging extension activities. Almost all parents and carers think that their children are taught well. Some good teaching was observed and in these lessons, teachers used questioning and time effectively. As a result, pupils were able to extend their thinking and improve their communication skills and also to work more speedily. For example, Reception Year children were asked to consider in pairs 'What would happen if we didn't have a mouth?' and gave well-considered responses. However, in lessons which were no better than satisfactory, these strategies and expectations were not as well developed and this was reflected in pupils' slower progress. As a result of oral questioning and feedback, teachers usually deal with misconceptions quickly. However, the quality of teachers' written feedback is inconsistent across the school. It does not provide pupils with enough guidance about how to improve and not enough opportunities are given for pupils to correct their work and avoid the repetition of errors.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Almost all parents and carers think that behaviour is good at the school. Pupils share

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this view and inspectors agree. This is because senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour. All members of the school community have worked together to agree a shared approach to the management of behaviour. There are examples of marked improvements in behaviour for some pupils, who recognise these personal achievements. Consequently, all pupils, including the very youngest, know what is expected. They demonstrate the impact of the school's promotion of spiritual, moral social and cultural development. For example, pupils talked enthusiastically about the reward system and recognise the fairness of any sanctions. Teachers and teaching assistants explain why rewards and praise are given and inspectors observed pupils' pride on these occasions. As a result, the learning environment of the school is positive, calm and purposeful. The breakfast club and playtimes are happy, harmonious occasions because pupils have been involved in choosing activities and they are well supervised by adults.

Almost all parents and carers think their children feel safe at school. Pupils confirmed this in their discussions with inspectors, who agree. Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and know whom to talk to if they have concerns. Almost all parents and carers think the school deals with any incidents well. One commented, 'The school handled the situation extremely well and kept me informed of what was happening.' Pupils have a generally good understanding of the risks they face and how to keep safe. For example, they know how important fire drills are and talked about safety on climbing equipment. However, they do not yet have an understanding of internet safety. Pupils' attendance is broadly average and the school has improved the punctuality of a few who are regularly late.

### **Leadership and management**

The interim headteacher, ably supported by the interim deputy headteacher, has successfully instilled a sense of ambition and drive to improve the work of the school. Senior leaders have detailed plans of action for improvement that are regularly monitored. Their monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievement are leading to improvements in teaching and achievement over time. However, not all staff and governors are yet fully involved in the whole-school evaluation of the impact of actions on the progress of all pupils on a regular basis. Teachers speak highly of how senior leaders support and challenge them and model good practice. An extensive programme for the professional development of staff and high expectations of accountability have contributed effectively to improvements in teaching. These factors, together with support from the governing body, contribute to the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The school has implemented a curriculum that links subjects together and which, overall, is satisfactory. It includes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy learning about each other's festivals. However, the curriculum does not yet provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their writing across all subjects.

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The school promotes equality for the different groups and tackles discrimination well. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. The school has effective relationships with parents and carers that help them to support their children's learning. Parents and carers confirmed this during the inspection. One parent commented, 'I am happy with the school as I can see my child has also improved at home.' There are strong partnerships with the children's centre and local community groups that make a positive contribution to the quality of opportunities for pupils and their families. The school is at the hub of the community.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



13 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of The Willows School and Early Years Centre, Milton Keynes  
MK6 2LP**

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed hearing you read and coming to see your lessons. We enjoyed coming to your playgrounds too. Your parents and carers are very pleased with the school. This letter is to tell you that we found that The Willows provides you with a satisfactory education. Here are some of the best things we found.

- You behave well in and around the school and you get on very well with your teachers, teaching assistants and your friends. You are helpful and kind.
- Your school's leaders, teachers and teaching assistants keep you safe and secure.
- You enjoy your lessons and your curriculum topics are interesting and exciting.

To help your school to be even better, we have asked your headteacher and senior leaders to:

- make sure that that your teachers help you to understand what you need to do to improve your work and give you time to do it
- make sure that you have more time to write in your lessons
- keep a closer check on how well you are doing.

You can help your school by continuing to work hard and enjoying everything you do at The Willows.

We send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Alexander  
Lead inspector

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