

The Willows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123999
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	359561
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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	468
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ben James
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Thursfield
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2008
School address	Greatbatch Avenue Penkhull, Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST4 7JU
Telephone number	01782 233280
Fax number	01782 233282
Email address	willows@sgfl.org.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2010
Inspection number	359561

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors saw 20 lessons taught by 16 teachers. A number of shorter visits were made to classrooms to look at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan and safeguarding policies, the school's data on pupils' progress, assessment records and case studies, curriculum planning and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Questionnaires from 102 pupils, 33 staff and 95 parents and carers were scrutinised.

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

- The strategies the school is using to accelerate the progress of all pupils, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The consistency of teaching and assessment and its impact on pupils' learning and progress, particularly that of more-able pupils.
- How effectively leaders and managers are driving improvement.

Information about the school

The school is a much larger than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and the number with a statement of special needs is twice the national average. This is partly because the school has a unit for pupils with hearing impairment on site. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school has achieved Healthy School status and is an extended school.

A new headteacher has been in post since April 2010 and a new deputy headteacher since September 2009.

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

The Willows is a good school where pupils thrive in a nurturing environment. Every pupil is valued as an individual. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. Typical comments include, 'My child loves being at this school and each year has progressed significantly'. The school has developed an excellent partnership with parents and carers.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge broadly in line with what is expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress and most reach the early learning goals set for them when they enter Year 1. The nursery provides a bright learning environment in which children enjoy playing and learning together. However, sometimes adults miss opportunities to extend children's learning through questioning and the well-equipped outdoor learning area is underused.

Pupils make increasingly good progress as they move through the school and by the end of Year 6 reach above average attainment. In the most recent tests, nearly half the pupils in Year 6 reached the higher Level 5, in both mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported by skilled teaching assistants. Leaders have identified that boys make slower progress in Key Stage 1 and this is currently an action point. The school has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning to good effect. It is because of good and occasionally outstanding teaching that pupils generally achieve well. In most lessons there is a brisk pace, pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning and teachers' high expectations ensure that pupils are given the right level of challenge. In a small number of lessons, the pace is slower because teachers talk for too long. Good systems are in place to monitor pupils' progress as they move from class to class and this enables the school to provide effective targeted support where necessary. The curriculum is well organised and imaginative, and impacts positively on pupils' motivation and progress. The quality of care, guidance and support is another good feature of this school. Great care is taken to ensure that hearing impaired pupils are able to take an active part in school life.

The headteacher, extremely well supported by her deputy headteacher, sets high expectations for everyone and leads by example. Staff and the governing body share her determination to continually improve and are united in a drive to raise achievement and attainment. The monitoring of teaching and learning is comprehensive. The governing body is well informed and provides a good balance of support and challenge. Safeguarding requirements are met. A recent audit has identified an aspect required to improve even further to ensure pupils' complete safety. The school, in partnership with the local authority, is in the process of carrying out the necessary change. Since the last inspection, the school has improved all aspects of its provision and pupils' achievement is better. In

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 light of this, and the school's significant strengths, leaders and managers demonstrate a good capacity to improve the school further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - developing adults' questioning skills
 - focusing leadership more on the development of children's learning
 - planning for better use of the outdoor learning environment.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring a brisk pace in all lessons
 - personalising learning to take even better account of boys' preferred learning styles in Key Stage 1 in order to accelerate their progress further
 - making more widespread use of the best practice evident in teaching, so that lessons constantly engage pupils' interest.
- Ensure the identified adjustments needed to maximise pupils' safety are completed as soon as possible.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Most pupils achieve well and enjoy their learning, especially in lessons where they are actively engaged. In a Year 1 class, for example, pupils made good progress in constructing a letter to poor Mr Wolf who was in hospital. They corrected their own mistakes and talked about their work with great enthusiasm. Pupils' extremely positive attitudes to learning and their good behaviour are strengths of the school. Inspection evidence indicates that progress is accelerating strongly and that attainment is above that found nationally in English, mathematics and science. In 2010, the targets set for pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were exceeded. The most-able pupils are successfully challenged and pupils' mathematical skills have improved this year. Good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a hearing impairment, result in them being fully included in school life, which helps them to achieve well both in terms of their personal development and in their academic work. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make particularly good progress because of the support they receive.

Pupils feel safe and attendance is above average. Pupils understand what it means to have a healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet and healthy exercise. Pupils eagerly take on responsibilities, such as play leaders, monitors, ECO- team and school councillors. They make a good contribution to the school and local community. The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and this is reflected in the respect and understanding they show to others. Secure basic skills, high self-esteem and confidence prepare pupils well for the next stage of education.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The majority of teaching and learning is good or better. Features of good lessons include a good pace so that pupils are engaged and active, good quality resources which stimulate interest, high expectations of what pupils can achieve and good subject knowledge. In these lessons, pupils enjoy their work and there is a sense of energy and achievement among pupils and staff. On occasions, the pace is not so brisk and pupils spend too long listening to the teacher as opposed to learning and practising new skills. The use of assessment is good. Teachers praise pupils for what they have done well and give useful advice on how to improve and reach the next level. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their work with adults and their peers and this strategy is helping to make pupils confident and articulate. Well-briefed teaching assistants support and challenge pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enabling them to take a full and active part in lessons.

The curriculum is very well organised and promotes well pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. It is imaginatively enhanced by visits and activities away from the classroom. For example, after a visit to Ford Green Hall, a local museum, pupils said, 'It brought our lessons on the Tudors alive'. Pupils have good access to music and sport and after-school clubs of various kinds are well attended. The curriculum is adjusted to take account of pupils' differing abilities and is designed so that all have the best opportunities to be successful. Although the lack of full attention to the preferred learning

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

styles of boys in Key Stage 1 has hampered their progress, strategies to accelerate the progress of this group of pupils are beginning to have a positive impact.

Good care, guidance and support lie at the heart of this inclusive school. A nurture group helps younger pupils who have difficulty in settling into school to feel relaxed and involved so that they are able to take a full part in school life. Good links with external agencies provide the necessary support for pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Pupils are given a clear moral framework and understand how to follow class rules, which are supported with rewards rather than sanctions. The school provides a deaf-friendly environment, for example, all school meetings and assemblies are signed so that everyone can take part and join in. Carefully planned arrangements are in place to support pupils as they enter and leave the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team is well focused on driving and sustaining improvement. The firm emphasis since the last inspection on improving teaching and learning has brought about significant improvements in classroom practice, and this has had a strong impact on pupils' progress leading to attainment rising to above average. The new leadership team has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require development, because self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. The school is aware that more can be done to accelerate the progress of boys in Key Stage 1. The school has succeeded well in addressing a previous weakness in mathematics. All adults in the school share the vision for improvement and staff morale is high. The school has developed an excellent partnership with parents and carers who appreciate the 'open door' policy, and who say that they are very well informed, and feel that they are true partners in their children's education. The school ensures equality of opportunity well in the curriculum and the gap between the attainment of girls and boys has been closed by the end of Year 6.

The effective governing body challenges and supports the school in equal measure and has a clear understanding of the work of the school. Members of the governing body frequently visit school and have established good procedures for canvassing the views of parents, carers and others before making strategic decisions. The contribution of the school to promoting community cohesion is good. It plays a valuable part in the local community, and increasingly in the wider community. The school provides a harmonious community where pupils from different backgrounds work well and happily together. Procedures for safeguarding are robust and meet requirements. All staff receive regular

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

training. Work is in process to fully secure the complete safety of pupils. The school manages its finances well and provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Recent changes of staffing are being supported by senior leadership and procedures introduced are taking time to have an impact on outcomes. Children enter Nursery with knowledge and skills broadly in line with what is expected for their age. Nearly all children make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 at the expected level. A range of teaching methods and some good resources provide a sound learning environment and sufficient activities to meet children's needs. However, planning is not fine-tuned enough to ensure that all children learn quickly and that teaching is always fully effective. There is some good direction from adults, but sometimes opportunities are missed to encourage children to talk about and reflect on their learning. Expectations about what children should achieve could be higher. In some parts of the day, children are free to choose their own activities and can explore, investigate and become independent learners. A good range of resources is provided indoors, but outdoor learning is not developed as well as it could be to extend children's learning experiences and to provide them with a full range of activities. Adults regularly observe and record children's learning and development but do not always use these assessments to tightly plan the next steps in learning.

Welfare arrangements meet requirements and the accommodation is secure. Effective induction arrangements help children to settle quickly, and there are good links with parents and carers and outside agencies to help to ensure that additional support is targeted to those needing additional help. Good attention is paid to children's personal

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

development and they are well cared for and in the main they play well with each other and generally behave well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire and all those who spoke to inspectors during the inspection were entirely positive in their appreciation of the school. There was particular praise for school leadership and the way in which the school is perceived to be rapidly improving. Parents and carers were unanimous that there are excellent lines of communication between school and home and said that they felt well informed about their children's progress. A few parents and carers expressed concern that children did not receive enough individual attention and that there was insufficient challenge for some pupils. Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed and found that the school ensures the good progress of most pupils and that the school generally sets high expectations in Key Stages 1 and 2, but that this is less evident in the Nursery and Reception classes and for boys at Key Stage 1.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The 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 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 468 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	71	27	28	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	59	38	40	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	37	52	55	5	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	46	45	47	4	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	51	54	42	44	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	56	40	42	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	51	44	46	2	2	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	35	46	48	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	44	48	51	2	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	41	51	54	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	44	48	51	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	51	54	42	44	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	60	36	38	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 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



24 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Willows Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 7JU

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when we inspected your school recently. The inspectors very much enjoyed talking to you, and reading the interesting work in your books. I really enjoyed your wonderful singing in assembly on Monday morning. What a super start to the week!

We agree with you and your parents and carers that The Willows is a good school. Nearly all of you are making good progress and reaching above average attainment by the end of Year 6. You told us how much you enjoy school and how you feel safe. We were impressed by your good behaviour in lessons and as you move around school. You receive good teaching and you have positive attitudes to learning and this is why you are achieving well. It is good to see your headteacher and all the other teachers have high expectations that you will do well and that they take good care of you.

Your school is well organised and well led by the headteacher, the governing body and other staff. They are always looking for ways to make the school even better. In order to help improve school further we have asked the headteacher to:

- make sure that children in the Nursery and Reception make good progress by helping them to talk more about their learning and using the outdoor space more creatively
- make sure all lessons are as good as the best that we saw so that you do lots of interesting activities and enjoy your work
- complete the work being done to make sure that you are absolutely safe at break and lunchtimes.

You can help the teachers by continuing to behave well, trying hard and following their advice on how to improve your work.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Judith Straw
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.