



Willow Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106745
Local Authority Doncaster
Inspection number 287599
Inspection date 27 September 2006
Reporting inspector Jane Hughes

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Alston Road
School category	Community		Bessacarr, Doncaster
Age range of pupils	4-11		South Yorkshire DN4 7EZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01302 539249
Number on roll (school)	414	Fax number	01302 533929
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Andrew Morris
		Headteacher	Mrs Yvonne Buckley
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school. Children enter the Reception classes from a wide variety of pre-school settings. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, with learning difficulties and disabilities or who speak a language other than English is smaller than average. The school has achieved the Artsmark Gold (2004) and was previously awarded Beacon school status (2002).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'I feel it necessary to shout out loud just how good a school Willow is!'

This ringing endorsement by one parent is echoed time and again by others in recognition of this outstanding school. The headteacher, governors, staff, parents and pupils share the same vision of excellence here. The headteacher's tenacious pursuit of the very highest quality educational experience for every pupil is infectious. She ensures that outstanding leadership and management are the catalyst for all pupils to achieve exceptionally well and to attain very high standards. This results in the school providing excellent value for money. Dynamic leaders, teachers and support assistants motivate pupils to learn as much as possible from each lesson or activity. Teachers' extensive subject expertise and high quality skills ensure that teaching and learning are outstanding. There is no place for complacency or underachievement in this school. Senior leaders work tirelessly to ensure that pupils enjoy an outstanding curriculum supplemented with a vast range of extra-curricular activities that span from crunching Tae Kwon Do to sweet singing in the choir.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills broadly in line with national expectations, and outstanding quality and provision ensures they get off to a flying start. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils attain exceptionally high standards. Pupils make rapid strides in their learning and skills development as they move through the school. Teachers' specialist subject expertise varies across classes but their uncompromising attention to detail and very high expectations of pupils are supremely consistent. This ensures that pupils enjoy the highest quality learning experiences throughout their whole time at Willow. They have a crystal clear understanding of the school's high moral code and rarely disappoint. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their behaviour is exemplary and their attitudes in lessons and around the school are of the highest order. Without adults overseeing their every move, even young children in Reception can be trusted to complete tasks diligently. Even so, adults do not give them the responsibility to choose for themselves when they would like to work or play outside during the day and this curbs their development as independent learners.

Pupils speak of their school and teachers with great affection. Their consistent refrain is, 'This is such a friendly school and the lessons are hard but good fun.' They love it here, as their high levels of attendance illustrate. The curriculum brims with rich, varied and challenging experiences that help to foster a keen love of learning. Music and sporting activities are real strengths in the school. Pupils compete, entertain and visit in the local community and beyond. This helps them to understand their place in the wider world. The highest levels of care ensure that pupils feel safe and parents agree that their children are extremely well cared for in school. Pupils are very well prepared for the future in terms of the basic skills they acquire. They have a clear understanding of the merits of a healthy lifestyle in terms of diet and exercise. They recognise potential hazards, both emotional and physical, and how to stay safe.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide regular opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage to choose their own activities in order to develop the skills of independent learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils start school with skills which vary from year to year but which are broadly in line with national expectations, except for some elements of their personal and social development which are a little below. By Year 6, pupils' attainment is far higher than average, showing that they make outstanding progress. Achievement in English, mathematics and science continues to be outstanding. In 2005, the school was placed in the top 1% of schools nationally, both overall and in mathematics. It was in the top 2% for English and science. Pupils attained equally impressive standards in the 2006 tests. Rigorous analysis of test results ensures that relative weaknesses are addressed from year to year. The school is very quick to identify and address any signs of possible underachievement among pupils. Successful measures are taken to accelerate the progress these pupils make so they reach the standards of which they are capable. All groups of pupils benefit from the highest quality teaching and support to ensure that they are happy in school and fulfil their potential.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils have an undoubted love of learning and speak with great warmth of their school. The highest expectations from all adults ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They learn well from each other about diversity within modern society because teachers are quick to seek alternative views in lessons, for example. Their compassionate reactions to some of the newly arrived younger children underline a spiritual maturity that resonates through the whole school family. Pupils relish challenge and respond with increasing maturity to the demands placed upon them by exacting adults. For example, Year 6 pupils collect, prepare and distribute daily fruit snacks. Pupils are very complimentary about the healthy meal options and enjoy a relaxed lunch hour. The headteacher is fiercely protective of this time and ensures that it is a valuable social occasion for pupils. Pupils eagerly embrace community events and organise effective fundraising projects for charities and the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Highly skilled teachers squeeze every last drop of learning from pupils, who rise to these daily challenges to achieve outstandingly well. Parents praise 'the fun and

interactive teaching styles which the children love'. Pupils come into lessons ready to learn and teachers move their learning on apace. Pupils respect the teachers expertise and agree that they learn a great deal from each adult. Teachers often drop in personal experiences to enliven lessons and pupils sit engrossed. For instance, Year 6 pupils sat spellbound as their teacher recounted how she was taught to sketch and shade her drawings correctly when she was at school. Careful questioning and a clear overview of learning at the end of a lesson help pupils to understand what they have learned and where they need to try again. Teachers and pupils work together in friendly partnership, agreeing realistic but challenging academic and personal learning targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The stimulating curriculum reaches far beyond statutory requirements by offering challenge, diversity and variety, all much valued by pupils. Well planned opportunities to use literacy, numeracy or information and communication technology in other subjects enable pupils to consolidate the basic skills they need to assure their future economic well-being. Whilst provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding in its impact on children's achievement and progress, children do not choose for themselves when to work or play outside. Adults decide for them and this limits their development as independent learners. The creative curriculum is full of opportunities for pupils to develop and excel through a huge variety of art, drama, dance, music and sporting activities. Teachers bring high levels of expertise to activities and produce some spine-tingling moments, for example in music and art. Pupils and parents value the impressive range of extra-curricular activities. First class partnerships with other schools and businesses support the school's determination to provide pupils with plentiful opportunities for academic, personal and physical growth. A strong personal, social and health education programme enables pupils to learn important life skills as well as becoming aware of key elements within sex, relationships and drugs education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Teachers and support staff work together seamlessly. They offer just the right mix of support and motivation to pupils so they are able to make exceptional progress in their academic, personal and emotional development. Pupils help to set their own targets and have a clear understanding of how to improve their work. Conscientious administrators, lunchtime staff and caretaking personnel ensure that the school operates smoothly. Procedures to safeguard pupils' welfare, health and safety are in place. Impressive levels of professional contact within the group of local schools and with outside agencies ensure that pupils receive just the right support. Young children in Reception settle quickly and Year 6 pupils move on with minimal anxiety because links with other schools are so effective. One parent acknowledged, 'It is difficult to think of any way in which our son could have been better prepared for the demands of secondary education.' Excellent resources such as the new sensory room offer respite for a few children who draw great benefit from such calm surroundings.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Undaunted by the challenge of meeting and exceeding exceptionally high targets each year, the headteacher draws the very best from everyone. The relentless determination of senior leaders and governors to maintain the highest possible standards are the secret of this school's success and provide an outstanding capacity to improve further. Accurate and manageable priorities for development enable adults to focus on specific areas that will have the most impact on pupils' achievement and maintain the hard-won excellence it has enjoyed for some years. The school constantly evaluates its performance. Self-evaluation is very accurately recorded and provides a succinct analysis of the current position and future priorities, although the school judges itself modestly. The school regularly seeks confirmation from pupils and parents that it is providing what they want. Parents remark on the 'good leadership from the top'. Conscientious governors bring individual expertise to the school. This adds to its success. Governors have a good understanding of the school's priorities, although they could offer even more challenge.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me into your school family for the day earlier this week. I was delighted to meet so many of you and to hear all the fine things you had to say about your school.

You will see from my report that I find your school to be outstanding, although I fear I am telling you something you know already! Here are some of the very best things I discovered about it.

Your headteacher is one of those people who inspires those around her. Just as she encourages you to want to do your very best, so she manages to do the same for all the adults who work in school with you. This means that all your teachers and the other adults work very well together so you enjoy the very best lessons.

You say that the splendid range of clubs, sporting and musical activities are such fun and I agree with you. It is also clear that you receive a great deal of helpful support and guidance from your teachers and this helps all of you to improve your work, achieve exceptionally well and reach such high standards.

When a school is as good as yours there is little to improve, although it takes a lot of effort from everyone, including you, to keep up such high standards. I have asked your school to give children in Reception the opportunity to choose when they work or play outside so they become even better at deciding for themselves what to do and when.

Congratulations on helping to make your school so successful. Keep working hard and enjoying every minute!