

Willow Tree Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101902
Local Authority	Ealing
Inspection number	323549
Inspection dates	31 March –1 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	668
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Mallam
Headteacher	Mr Simon Adams
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Priors Farm Lane Northolt Middlesex UB5 5DY
Telephone number	020 8845 4181
Fax number	020 8845 2253

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This primary school is much larger than average. It has 23 classes, including two Nursery classes that children attend either mornings or afternoons, having joined the school in the September following their third birthday. Almost all continue into the Reception classes. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is almost three times the national average. Half the pupils speak a language other than English as their first language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is over twice the national average. The proportion of pupils who have difficulties learning the basic skills is around the national average. About one-fifth of the pupils are refugees or asylum seekers. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the customary times of the year is much higher than nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Results are improving slowly. Pupils enjoy school and mix well together, showing high levels of respect for one another's cultures and backgrounds. The majority of parents are happy with the provision that the school offers, but some parents from the low level of response to the parents' questionnaire do not feel the same level of satisfaction. Almost all indicate that the pupils behave well and this is certainly true. Pupils show good concentration in lessons and try hard with their work, although the standard of handwriting and presentation skills is not high enough. Typical of the majority, one parent writes, 'Our children are very happy at Willow Tree. Not only is their academic progress good, but there is also a sense that their well-being and enjoyment of school are important'.

Pupils achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and satisfactorily in the main school, although there are signs of an improvement in standards surging up from the younger classes. Predictions for the current Year 2 pupils show an improvement on last year and, if realised, this will result in broadly expected standards for this age. These pupils' good progress is due to a concentration on developing their literacy and numeracy skills in a more focused way and matching these activities very closely to their abilities. Although standards in Year 6 have been improving, they have remained below average and this pattern looks set to continue. This is partly because of the high number of pupils currently in Year 6 who experience difficulties learning the basic skills, but also due to some underachievement, particularly in science, writing and mathematics. Pupils' investigative skills in science are not yet well developed because, in the past, this aspect of the curriculum has not received the attention that it should have. Nevertheless, there are some good aspects to the curriculum. It gives good attention to different subjects. Furthermore, the provision for extra-curricular activities is particularly strong. It supports pupils' healthy lifestyles and pupils are keen to select from the wide variety of sporting activities available.

Pupils' personal development is good. Staff take extremely good care of the pupils so that they feel secure and know how to conduct themselves safely. The very good relationships between staff and pupils encourage pupils with concerns to approach staff and share any worries. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future.

The school has identified many of the correct priorities for its development, although the school development plan itself does not include the improvements needed in science. Strategic development is satisfactory. However, subject and individual year plans, together with the overall development plan, are not written rigorously enough as instruments that will lead to robust improvements. Teaching is satisfactory because there is a wide range in quality. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage where the children now get off to a good start, with a significant improvement in this provision over the last two years. However, this better start has not yet had time to influence standards further than Year 2. The school has suffered from much turnover of staff in recent years, but the picture is now more stable. There are pockets of good and outstanding teaching but not enough is yet of this quality. Nevertheless, the school now has a more secure base of staff to build from and demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage has developed well in the last two years and, as a result, the children's progress is much improved. It continues to develop. Attainment is very low on entry to the Nursery, as four-fifths of the children have a different language to English as their first language and many speak little English. Their knowledge and understanding of the world is also a weak feature at this stage. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Many of the children reach the expectations for the end of the Reception year in most aspects of their learning, although their understanding of shape and measures and their knowledge and understanding of the world are weaker aspects. Good teaching supports the children's good progress. The environment is attractive and well equipped for learning, with a spacious outside area which is used well as an extension to the classroom. Children take turns to act as the 'lollipop man' at the zebra crossing on the road track outside and this supports their understanding of safety on the roads.

Activities are well planned and set out and the learning potential for these is clearly outlined to support staff in their interactions with the children. Small plots of garden arouse the children's interest in plants and in the seeds which they sow themselves. Assessment is used well to plan group numeracy and literacy activities and banks of evidence support the levels that children reach in their work. The provision is well led and managed and the staff work well as a team. Staff provide excellent care for the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by Year 6.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good and outstanding.
- Raise expectations for the quality of pupils' handwriting and the way they set out their work.
- Improve the quality of development planning so that aspects to be improved are more clearly understood and it is apparent how success is to be measured.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards of work are creeping upwards across the school, with improvements coming through from the younger classes as a result of a focus on literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are now reaching broadly average standards by Year 2 which represents good achievement. Standards are still below average by Year 6, though improving. Current standards in Year 6 are below expectations overall because of the high number of pupils who have difficulties learning basic skills, several of whom have transferred into the school since Year 4. Results in science by Year 6 have been very low because the school has not given enough attention to developing pupils' investigative skills in the subject. It has begun to address this. Pupils who have learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language make similar rates of progress to other pupils. The reading skills of Year 6 pupils are much stronger than their writing skills and this is partly due to handwriting skills which are not as good as they could be. Girls do not attain as highly in mathematics as the boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are well behaved and demonstrate good attitudes in lessons, listening attentively and willingly taking part, although they do not always take enough pride in the presentation of their work. They are friendly and eager to please, reflective and caring. They come from many different backgrounds and cultures and get on very well together. They feel safe in school and develop a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle. For example, they take part in a lot of sport and eat a good range of fruit and vegetables at lunchtimes. They enjoy opportunities to take responsibility. The school council seeks out pupils' views on aspects of their learning, such as a recent survey of mathematics. Pupils contribute well to the community. For instance, the choir has gained a well-deserved reputation locally for its quality. Pupils take a good interest in their homework. Attendance is improving but below average and affected by pupils who remain on the school's roll when their whereabouts is unknown. The skills pupils develop prepare them satisfactorily for their future education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage pupils well and create a good atmosphere for learning. They plan lessons thoroughly and give good attention to pupils' different needs. They deploy teaching assistants well with groups of pupils, especially in English and mathematics. Good use of information and communication technology and other equipment helps to provide a visual and practical approach. In a Year 6 English lesson, the teacher effectively used a video clip about a safari park to support pupils' writing about 'likes' and 'dislikes' on such visits. In the same lesson, pupils created a lively sentence which included good descriptive vocabulary by adding words on individual whiteboards as they stood in a row to form the sentence. However, teachers do not have consistently high expectations of the way pupils present their work or of their handwriting. Accuracy can suffer, for example when they draw graphs on inappropriate paper in science. Staff's skills in teaching investigational science and mathematics have been weaker aspects of their work, but are now improving.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There are some good features in an otherwise satisfactory curriculum. The school gives good attention to basic skills and combines this with a good balance of other learning opportunities. Provision for extra-curricular activities is strong and many of these activities support pupils' healthy lifestyles. The provision for personal, social and health education is good and supports pupils' good personal development. Provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well organised. The school's provision for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English is satisfactory. The school is beginning to address weaknesses in pupils' investigative skills in science. It also recognises the need to increase the excitement in mathematics by introducing more investigational activities and giving pupils opportunities to apply the mathematical skills that they have acquired. Handwriting has not been given sufficient attention. The school is developing links between subjects to support pupils' fuller understanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care of the pupils is very strong. The school provides very good support for pupils and their families and reaches out to them so that any concerns can be handled quickly and extra support obtained when necessary. Child protection procedures are very good and risk assessments undertaken regularly. The school works hard to reduce absence in conjunction with the attendance officer. Specialist care and welfare staff play a major role in securing pupils' happiness and safety. The school makes very good arrangements to welcome new pupils from different backgrounds and so they integrate quickly.

The school has good mechanisms in place to track the pupils' progress and such reviews are carried out regularly. Marking is generally good and the best provides advice to help the pupils' future learning. Pupils have individual targets to aim for in English, but they are not yet as well developed in mathematics. Pupils are not as aware as they might be of what skills they need to develop in order to get to the next level in their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school runs well on a day-to-day basis and staff work effectively as a team. The headteacher demonstrates very perceptive skills when judging teaching and learning and does so accurately. The new subject leader for science and those for English and mathematics are working well to raise standards.

Strategic planning is satisfactory but the school development plan does not include science where urgent attention is needed to improve teaching and learning. Year leaders' plans and subject action plans are written regularly and reviewed. However, the aims, what success will look like and how it will be measured, are not clear enough. School self-evaluation is largely accurate, but the school's own judgement about leadership and management is too high. As yet, staff do not show consistency in their expectations, for example, of how pupils should present their work.

Governance is satisfactory. The curriculum committee is led well and works hard to set a lead in finding out about the school by adopting a questioning approach, but the governing body is below strength. It has systems in place to audit the way community cohesion is promoted and works well to secure it. There is effective practice in reaching out to local groups, such as to particular ethnic groups of parents.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

27 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Willow Tree Primary School, Middlesex, UB5 5DY

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and seeing what you do. We were very impressed with the way that you all get on so well together. The school provides you with a satisfactory education and you make satisfactory progress. Your development as young people is good. You behave well and show lots of interest in your lessons. The staff take very good care of you. It was good to know that you are confident to talk to them if you have any worries and that they help you so much.

There are some things that we have asked the staff to do to help the further development of the school:

- help you to get to higher standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6
- raise the quality of teaching and learning so that more of this is of a good or outstanding quality
- improve your handwriting skills and the pride you take in presenting your work
- improve the way that they plan for school developments so that they know more exactly what they want to do and how successful they have been.

Finally, we want to wish you well for the future. We hope that all your best dreams will come true. Thank you so much for your help once again.

Yours faithfully

Peter Sudworth

Lead Inspector