

The Willow Primary School

Adams Road, London N17 6HW

Inspection dates

16–19 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school has improved from good to outstanding because of the high expectations, tenacity and ambition of senior leaders and governors.
- Senior leaders have exceptionally high expectations of what pupils are capable of. Staff share the headteacher's philosophy of 'We never give up on any child.' As a result, all pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, thrive in a caring and supportive environment.
- Leaders at all levels ensure that an exceptional level of consistently high-quality teaching is monitored throughout key stages 1 and 2. The strategies put in place by leaders to maintain this quality are exemplary.
- Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics accelerates from low starting points at the start of key stage 1 to being at least in line with standards seen nationally at the end of Year 6. The progress of many disadvantaged pupils exceeds that of their peers.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. A consistently calm, pleasant atmosphere in which pupils work and play together and enjoy very positive relationships with staff is another striking feature of the school.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is extremely well led and managed.
- Pupils have many opportunities to work with others and share their experiences as a result of highly effective partnerships with the special school that shares the same site. During the inspection, pupils of both schools took an active part in a creative arts week including a carnival.
- The governing body knows the school extremely well. Governors ask challenging questions about the school's performance. The partnership between the headteacher and chair of governors is highly productive and supportive.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and exciting. Strong teaching in different subjects enables pupils to make rapid progress. Extra-curricular activities are plentiful and very popular.
- Early years provision is not yet outstanding because children's progress in the Nursery classes is uneven, particularly in communication and language skills.
- The outdoor learning areas in the early years do not provide materials and stimulation of the appropriate quality to promote better literacy skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rates of progress children make in the early years by:
 - ensuring that children’s progress is monitored systematically and appropriate support put in place promptly for those who may fall behind
 - putting in place materials and activities of a high quality in the outdoor learning areas to enable children to develop their communication and language skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher communicates her vision for the school clearly to staff, parents and the wider community. Her ambition to include every pupil and make sure the school environment and quality of teaching is the best it can possibly be has paid off.
- Leaders know the school well and what they need to do to continually improve and maintain the high quality of provision and pupil outcomes. Senior leaders do not hesitate to challenge weak practice. Staff receive highly supportive training, advice and guidance to maintain the high quality of teaching. Having said that, leaders do not delay in taking formal steps if they do not see any improvement.
- Leaders at all levels make sure that teachers maintain their high-quality practice. Regular monitoring activities, including checking pupils' work, visiting lessons and discussing pupils' achievement, ensure that teaching remains consistently strong with increasing examples of exemplary practice.
- Leaders carefully analyse the work of pupils who may be at risk of slipping behind or those who are not making the progress of which they are capable. Provision of additional support or different resources is swiftly in place. Within a short space of time, these strategies are checked up on to make sure that they are working. This rigour and routine makes sure that pupils' progress is rapid, sustained and, in many cases, accelerated.
- The curriculum provides a range of subjects, including French from the Nursery through to Year 6. Music and the creative arts are regular features of school life. While inspectors were in school, a creative arts week was taking place. Activities included drumming workshops, costume design and a carnival.
- Effective use of the sports premium means that specialist instructors are employed and all pupils have access to well-maintained equipment and sports kits. Around 24 after-school extra-curricular activities take place every week. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoy taking part in the clubs on offer, including circus skills, street dance and animation club. A high number of disadvantaged pupils attend these activities.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain because of the excellent programme of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The different faiths and backgrounds of pupils are celebrated and the pupils are strongly encouraged to show care and compassion to others less fortunate than themselves.
- Governors and other leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is used in a highly productive manner. Through highly focused meetings, different groups of pupils are identified and provided with additional support where required. This approach has resulted in many disadvantaged pupils making accelerated rates of progress, faster than their peers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive a range of support which is well led and managed. The assistant headteacher in charge of this aspect of the school's work ensures that pupils with statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans receive the specific support and attention they require. Recently, an additional resource known as 'Otter Class' was established for

small groups of pupils to attend part time and to work together with additional adults. Pupils attending this class make good progress. Their ability to develop their social skills is improving noticeably. Leaders target the funding for special educational needs accurately and ensure that it is spent effectively.

Governance of the school

- The chair of governors leads the governing body in a highly effective manner. Very recently, she received the 'Governor of the year' award from the local authority.
- The partnership between the headteacher and chair of governors is a close but challenging one.
- The governing body has a wealth of experience and expertise which provides robust and appropriate challenge to all leaders. This level of challenge has led to a scrutiny of the progress of different groups of pupils and the steps leaders have taken to support these pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors and senior leaders check, record and discuss the robust recruitment processes and the single central record regularly.
- All staff have received the appropriate training and information to help keep children safe. Staff understand the different types of risks the community faces and are up to date with the latest guidance regarding radicalisation and extremism, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation.
- The school has very effective links with different agencies, including the local authority, police, social care and health professionals. This strong partnership working ensures that pupils are kept safe.
- The school's family liaison officer provides vulnerable families with timely support and advice. This support has helped some of the most vulnerable pupils' attendance remain regular during difficult times.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers plan and organise lessons extremely well so that all pupils achieve exceptionally well. Teachers' high expectations demand pupils to work hard. Pupils respond extremely well to the challenges teachers set. For example, in a Year 3 class, staff challenged pupils to write descriptive vocabulary for a poem. The pupils rose to the challenge of using onomatopoeia, metaphors and similes.
- Teachers have deep subject knowledge. They use this to good effect by asking questions that demand more of pupils' thinking and learning. This was used well, for example in Year 6, where pupils explained with excitement what characters were thinking and spoke to each other animatedly and articulately about their ideas.

- Teachers are highly effective in using pupils' prior learning and understanding to set challenging targets to aid rapid progress. Pupils' work is discussed with them, and ideas about how to make improvements to reach higher standards are commonplace.
- Behaviour management is excellent. Pupils are able to concentrate for long periods of time and enthusiastically answer questions and work together on problems and challenges. In Year 6 science lessons, for example, pupils excitedly made electrical circuits and showed impressively high levels of collaboration and teamwork.
- Pupils demonstrate a love of reading and talk about the stories and characters with enthusiasm and interest. Pupils' progress in reading is rapid because of the strong focus every class has on books, reading and developing a good understanding of different types of text.
- Pupils' writing is of a very high quality throughout the school. Pupils are taught how to plan and develop writing stamina. One pupil told an inspector, 'We make notes, use our brain and go full throttle!'
- Pupils in key stage 1 use their phonics skills well to read and write. Pupils make substantial progress from low starting points to reach the national average, and the vast majority reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics skills checks.
- Mathematics is a strength of the school. Pupils' work shows deep learning in a range of mathematical topics. Pupils confidently use calculation strategies, helping them achieve higher-than-average results.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and knowledgeable and provide timely support to pupils. Their questioning skills help those pupils who require additional support to become more confident in their learning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities they make very strong progress from their starting points in different subjects.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress and often exceed their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because of the close attention paid by teachers and leaders to the needs of pupils who speak different languages.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils listen to each other respectfully and are skilful in collaborating with each other.
- The school is a central and important part of the community. The headteacher, alongside her staff, ensures that pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable are extremely well supported. The close links with the special school and children's centre which share the school's site are a real strength of the school.
- The headteacher has widened the school's involvement with other outside agencies, which includes strong links with housing officers to help families avoid evictions and supporting their needs for clothing.

- Pupils say that they feel safe because ‘the staff look after us.’ This is reflected in the school’s questionnaire, where 93% of the respondents were positive. Pupils also talked positively about the school’s approach to restorative justice, which promotes a strong sense of community and partnership among pupils of different ages.
- Assemblies successfully promote and regularly reinforce key messages about healthy living and being safe outside the school, for example from ChildLine and the NSPCC.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Through assemblies and curriculum sessions, pupils learn how to stay safe online and the potential dangers associated with social media.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Attendance is a success story for the school. It has improved over the last few years to be at least in line with the national average.
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the peer mentors, who are pupils trained to provide support and help to other pupils to work on conflict resolution. As a result, there are very few incidents of poor behaviour.
- In lessons, pupils settle down quickly and have high levels of concentration. Inspectors saw pupils readily applauding classmates’ successes during lessons.
- In the online survey and in conversations with inspectors, parents were positive about pupils’ behaviour in school and the ways in which leaders promote pupils’ excellent attitudes to learning
- Pupils are highly confident that adults deal with the rare bullying incidents promptly and thoroughly when these occur.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- In previous years, pupils’ attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was often below that seen nationally at the end of key stages 1 and 2. There has been a dramatic and impressive improvement in the speed of pupils’ progress and their levels of attainment, which bring them in line with the national average.
- Pupils make significant progress from starting points in the early years which are well below those seen nationally. By the end of Year 6, pupils’ standards in reading in 2016 were at least in line with those seen nationally.
- Leaders’ analysis of previous years’ results identified that disadvantaged pupils’ attainment in reading was below that of their peers. Leaders put highly effective strategies into place. As a result, the school’s assessment information and pupils’ work indicate that pupils are now making rapid progress to bring this group to be at least in line with, and in many cases above, their peers.
- Pupils’ writing skills across the school have improved significantly. Displays, books and assessment information indicate exceptionally strong progress. The school prioritised pupils’ writing last year, and the impact of clear and targeted work with different groups of pupils has paid off, especially for the most able disadvantaged.

- Pupils' progress in mathematics is very strong. Their attainment at the end of key stage 2 is above average. Inspectors agree with leaders' analysis of pupils' work and assessment information, which suggest that the current groups of pupils continue to make sustained and rapid progress in all year groups.
- Pupils make equally strong progress in other subjects, for example science, history and geography. The arts have an impressive impact on pupils' learning, with specialist teachers for music and art, ensuring that pupils are able to deepen their skills, knowledge and understanding to become confident performers.
- Pupils in key stage 1 have also made rapid progress from the beginning of Year 1. Their phonics skills have improved swiftly, enabling pupils to decode and enjoy a wide range of texts.
- Leaders check the progress of different groups of pupils who are at risk of underperforming, including vulnerable pupils. The differences in achievement between different groups are diminishing rapidly.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress from their different starting points. This is because of the close attention and the varying types of support that match their needs accurately.

Early years provision

Good

- An increasing proportion of children reach the expected good levels of development, and the majority of them are ready for Year 1. However, in 2016 this was still below the national average. Since September 2016, children in Reception have made good progress from very low starting points. An increasing number of children have begun to demonstrate good writing skills in line with those expected for their age.
- Children's phonic skills have rapidly improved and they are able to recognise, say and write a wide range of words of increasing complexity. Children have access to a good range of opportunities that develop their handwriting skills and accurate letter formation. There are many activities where children write for a purpose and practise their early literacy skills.
- Children's social and personal skills have developed well over the year. Children confidently move around the classroom and outdoor areas talking with adults and their classmates. Parents enjoy looking at the learning journals, which contain photographs and descriptions of how their children are developing and learning.
- Parents told inspectors that they felt that their children settled in well to early years and are making good progress. Parents are pleased with the way in which teachers challenge their children to achieve highly, for example by sending challenging texts home which children read with increasing fluency.
- Safeguarding is effective. Children are cared for and behave well. They access toys and games safely and move between the indoor and outdoor learning environments in a sensible and mature manner.
- In the Nursery class, not all children have made the progress of which they are capable. This is due to changes to staffing during the year. Leaders are aware of this and have put in place secure arrangements to improve the situation.

School details

Unique reference number	102131
Local authority	Haringey
Inspection number	10031759

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	486
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marilyn Francis
Headteacher	Dawn Ferdinand
Telephone number	0208 885 8800
Website	http://thewillow.haringey.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@thewillow.haringey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 November 2012

Information about this school

- The Willow Primary School is larger than most primary schools.
- The school shares the modern, purpose-built site with a separately managed special school.
- The school also shares the site with the children’s centre which is managed by the governing body.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than that seen nationally.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.
- The school runs after-school and breakfast clubs which the governing body manages.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets statutory requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection started as a short inspection with one inspector and converted to a full inspection two days later, led by one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors and a team of Ofsted Inspectors.
- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons in all year groups for different lengths of time. Most of these visits to lessons were with senior leaders.
- Formal and informal discussions took place with senior leaders, including governors, subject leaders, parents and a representative from the local authority.
- Documentation relating to the school’s website and safeguarding, including the single central record, was scrutinised.
- Inspectors reviewed the school’s self-evaluation, plans for improvement and analysis of pupils’ attainment and progress.
- Pupils’ work in different subjects was scrutinised alongside the senior leadership team and subject leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons, as well as before school and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading individually and during lessons.
- Inspectors considered the 46 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

John Seal, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Chris Birtles	Ofsted Inspector
Hilary Ryan	Ofsted Inspector
David Bryant	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Hayward, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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