

The Willows School Academy Trust

Stipularis Drive, Hayes, Middlesex, UB4 9QB

Inspection dates 25–26 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not consistently good across all classes and subjects.
- Pupils are making stronger progress in reading and mathematics. In writing they achieve less well and make slower progress. This is because teachers do not provide them with enough opportunities to practise and improve their writing skills.
- Not all teachers provide regular, helpful comments when marking pupils' books. Pupils do not always know what to do to improve their work and, therefore, make slower progress.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning do not compare and contrast the progress of specific groups of pupils. Leaders and governors do not know how effective actions have been in raising achievement for these groups.
- Not all staff are set performance targets that are specific or measurable. Leaders and governors are not always checking that teachers' actions have led to improvements in pupil progress.
- The new curriculum plan is not fully implemented across the school. Plans to ensure that all subjects are taught at the correct level are at an early stage.

The school has the following strengths

- The inspirational headteacher has provided determined leadership to create a cohesive and supportive team. All adults are working well together to make rapid improvements.
- Pupils' understanding of different spiritual, moral, social and cultural values is very good. Staff model the high levels of tolerance and empathy they wish pupils to adopt.
- Improvements in behaviour and safety have been sustained and are good. Pupils feel proud to attend the school. They respond positively to the high expectations staff have of them. They know they are safe and respected as individuals. Consequently, they have developed good attitudes towards their learning.
- Strong links with parents have helped pupils to make better progress.

Information about this inspection

- The school was last inspected in June 2013 and was judged to require special measures because leaders and governors were not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvements. Since June 2013, the school has received four monitoring inspections, the fourth being this inspection. This inspection began under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At the end of the first day it converted to become an inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. Evidence from the first three monitoring visits was used to inform the judgements on this inspection.
- The inspector observed 12 part lessons taught by three teachers. Observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Classes were observed throughout the inspection using short drop-in visits to observe teaching and learning across subjects, talk to pupils and check their work in books. A scrutiny of pupils' books was carried out to check the quality of learning across the school.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, a group of teachers and teaching assistants, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other members. Conversations were held with a representative from the local authority responsible for special educational needs, the school improvement partner and the seconded leader from Swakeleys School for Girls. Pupils were spoken to informally throughout the inspection.
- The inspector was unable to take account of parental views expressed through the Parent View survey due to the low number of responses. Account was taken of responses to the school's own parental survey and letters sent to the school. Parental comments recorded as part of weekly conversations with key workers were looked at. The inspector also met with a parent attending a pupil review meeting.
- The nine staff questionnaires returned during the inspection were considered.
- The inspector scrutinised information about pupil achievement and checked a sample of individual pupil files. Records relating to behaviour and attendance were evaluated. Documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work were looked at.
- A review of all safeguarding records and procedures was carried out.

Inspection team

Lesley Cox, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The school converted to academy status in November 2011. The current headteacher took up his post in September 2012. Since being placed into a category of concern, leaders and governors have been supported by a leader seconded from Swakeleys School for Girls. A new deputy headteacher took up his post in November 2013. Considerable changes to the governing body have taken place since the last inspection.
- The Willows School Academy Trust is a special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most have had their education disrupted before joining the school and have gaps in their knowledge and understanding when they arrive.
- Just over half of all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The remaining pupils are from Black Caribbean and other ethnic groups. Most pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average. The funding is for children in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.
- There are currently no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so it is all at least good and more is outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to improve their writing skills so that they make the same progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics
 - making sure all teachers provide pupils with helpful feedback that identifies what they need to do next to improve their work and deepen their understanding
 - ensuring that teachers plan appropriate learning activities for all year groups and subjects so that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their learning when they leave the school.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing how leaders and governors monitor and evaluate how much, and how quickly, different pupil groups are learning, so that they can check how successful interventions have been
 - ensuring that all staff are set performance targets that are measurable and link to how much progress pupils are making
 - fully implementing a whole school curriculum plan that takes account of all National Curriculum subjects and the skills and knowledge pupils need to have learnt by the end of Key Stage 2.

An external review of governance should be completed in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved further.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have made the necessary improvements to ensure the school is removed from special measures and they have been highly effective in improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards learning. This is recognised by parents and staff who say behaviour has dramatically improved since the last inspection.
- Leaders can make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching across the school. The amount of good teaching over time has risen, but has yet to lead to consistently good progress across all classes and subjects. Leaders have taken effective action to raise achievement in reading and mathematics. They have been less effective in improving writing standards across the school.
- Leaders have improved systems for monitoring teaching and analysing information about achievement. This has helped leaders eradicate inadequate teaching. While the progress of individual pupils is monitored very effectively, the performance of groups is not checked closely enough.
- Systems for monitoring staff performance have been introduced and are regularly reviewed by leaders and governors. However, not all targets are linked to the achievement of pupils. This means leaders cannot judge if teachers' actions have led to pupils making better progress.
- Leaders have devised a new curriculum plan and this is steadily being embedded. However, plans to teach all subjects to an appropriate level across the three mixed-age classes are not fully implemented. The curriculum provides pupils with regular opportunities to improve their physical well-being and time to reflect on their behavioural, emotional and social needs. It also promotes good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development through a regular programme of visitors and trips that link closely to activities taught in lessons. This allows pupils to learn about life in modern Britain and appreciate its diversity.
- The pupil premium funding has been put to good use to pay for additional services from an educational psychologist and speech and language therapist. They have provided training and support for staff, pupils and parents, and the impact of their work can be seen in improved pupil progress. Pupils are provided with a smart uniform to wear which has helped them feel part of the school community. The sport premium has been used to employ a sports coach, purchase new sports equipment and provide classes in Kung Fu. The impact of this can be seen in how pupils are increasingly able to work as part of a team, as well as improving their sports skills and well-being.
- The headteacher and governors have ensured that new staff are well supported and receive appropriate training to allow them to carry out their duties. Consequently, staff turnover is low. This has created improved stability for pupils and allowed some middle management responsibilities to be devolved to teachers and teaching assistants. Staff feel valued and appreciated because they are all playing an important part in improving the school and supporting pupils. As a result, senior leaders now have more time to plan for further improvements.
- The school communicates very effectively with parents. They are kept informed about the progress pupils make through regular conversations with key workers. They receive guidance on how to support their child to complete homework tasks. A parental forum meets regularly at the school. Leaders value the contribution parents make and use their support to help pupils make better progress at home and at school.
- Leaders and governors have drawn on external support effectively. They work closely with other professionals and agencies to ensure that pupils are well supported and safe. A school improvement partner has supported leaders to improve the school's action plan. A seconded leader from a local school provides strategic advice and support to the governing body. Links with the local authority have been strengthened and the school is better placed to play a bigger role in supporting pupils with special educational needs across the wider community. Leaders and governors are no longer reliant on external support to fulfil their responsibilities and have the capacity to make further improvements.
- The governance of the school:
 - The governing body has gone through a period of considerable turmoil since the last inspection. An external review of governance was started, but was not completed as the membership of the board was constantly changing. Due to the effective actions of the new Chair, the membership of the governing body is now stable. New governors have been elected and roles and responsibilities for all members have been agreed. The Chair of the Governing Body has recently achieved accreditation as a Local Leader of Governance (LLG). Governors have benefited from training to help them understand the responsibilities of governance. A new clerk has been appointed and meeting minutes demonstrate that improved levels of challenge and support take place. Governors have ensured that the financial situation of the school is secure. They share the headteacher's vision and are firmly committed to the principles

of equality and inclusion so that pupils may make a strong contribution to life in modern Britain.

- Governors visit regularly and monitor specific areas of the school’s performance according to their own skills and interests. They can evaluate achievement information and have an accurate understanding of pupil performance across the school and how this compares to other pupils nationally. They know what difference the pupil premium and sport funding is having on the progress of eligible pupils. However, they do not evaluate the performance of different groups of pupils closely enough so that any concerns can be identified quickly. They have implemented a new performance management system, but are not checking that pupil progress targets have been met when agreeing further salary progression.
- The governing body has made sure that the school’s safeguarding systems are robust and meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are given clear and consistent messages by adults and respond well to the high expectations staff have of them. Behaviour is not outstanding because some pupils are still developing a love of learning or rely on adults to keep them fully engaged in lessons.
- The new behaviour policy has a strong focus on rewards and recognition for pupils when they behave well. Pupils earn points which they can decide to spend in the school shop every week or bank for bigger rewards later. Other treats, such as a weekly trip to eat lunch in a local restaurant, also have to be earned. Pupils increasingly accept responsibility for improving their own behaviour because they can see how this benefits them.
- When behaviour is more challenging it is effectively de-escalated by adults. As a result, the number of incidents requiring physical restraint have rapidly reduced and are an increasingly rare occurrence. Pupils are supportive of each other and trust adults to help them reflect when they make mistakes. They are encouraged to make amends for any poor behaviour and return to their work quickly. Consequently, very little learning time is lost.
- Pupils enjoy being at school. Attendance has improved and is now in line with other schools nationally. No pupil has been excluded since the last inspection because staff are firmly committed to ensuring individual needs are met. Key workers share successful strategies with parents so that they can be reinforced at home. Pupils make better progress because they attend more regularly and their learning is not interrupted.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, both inside and outside school. They are considerate of others when moving around the building and play safely with the outdoor play equipment at breaktimes. First aid and injury logs support this view. The frequent trips and activities that take place off site are carefully risk assessed and improve pupils’ social skills and self-confidence.
- School buildings are attractive and well maintained. The site boundaries are secure and there are safe systems in place to enter and leave the building. Pupils move around freely and know where to go if they need time to reflect. Staff supervision levels are safe, but unobtrusive. This helps pupils to accept responsibility for their own actions.
- All staff are vigilant and knowledgeable about child protection matters and know how to report any concerns they may have. The school works closely with external agencies to support more vulnerable pupils and families.
- Individual pupil support plans are detailed and regularly reviewed. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are recorded and monitored by class teachers. The frequency of incidents has reduced over time for most pupils as a result of the effective support they receive.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good across all classes and subjects. Some teaching is outstanding and none is inadequate.
- Class teachers plan learning activities that are engaging and fun. When teaching is good, activities take account of the very diverse needs of all pupils in the three mixed-age classes. The teaching of reading and mathematics addresses the learning needs of all pupils, including the most able, so that they make good progress in these subjects. However, older pupils make slower progress in science, humanities and

creative arts. This is because these subjects are taught less frequently or learning activities do not take account of the knowledge and skills that pupils of different ages need to acquire.

- Opportunities for pupils to improve their writing skills are not provided frequently enough. Pupils are not encouraged to write at length when learning about other subjects. The work seen in history, geography and science books is over reliant on worksheets which require little writing to be done. Consequently, pupils, including those who are most able, make slower progress in writing than they do in reading and mathematics.
- When teaching is good, teachers apply the agreed marking policy in a consistent manner. However, not all teachers ensure that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and make better progress.
- All adults model high standards of speaking and listening. Staff have agreed what language to use to encourage mutual respect between themselves and pupils. This improves pupils' self-esteem so that pupils engage more positively with their learning.
- Teaching assistants are highly effective. Teachers ensure that they make a strong contribution to planning lessons and assessing how much progress pupils are making. Pupils benefit from their support because it is focused on improving learning as well as monitoring behaviour.
- Classrooms are attractive and well equipped. Informative displays engage the interest of pupils and help them extend their learning. For example, a display on Egyptian mummification techniques showed how pupils had mummified a large fish themselves before proudly displaying it on the wall.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards of literacy and numeracy throughout the school have risen since the last inspection. However, achievement still requires improvement as the standards reached by pupils in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 fell slightly last year and are below those of other pupils nationally. The school's own tracking of achievement and progress shows that pupils' performance in writing remains below that achieved in reading and mathematics across the school.
- Older pupils make slower progress in subjects other than English and mathematics because teachers are not planning lessons that help pupils build on what they already know.
- The majority of pupils make expected progress in mathematics, with nearly half on track to make better than expected progress by the end of the year. This compares favourably with pupils nationally.
- In reading, most pupils make better than expected progress and do significantly better than other pupils nationally.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills because these are modelled effectively by adults.
- The most able pupils make at least expected progress in mathematics and better than expected progress in reading. However, as for other pupils, their progress in writing is slower.
- The school has made effective use of the pupil premium funding and there are no significant differences in the progress of disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils in the school. The very small number of pupils in each cohort make any national comparisons statistically unreliable.
- Effective use of the additional primary sport funding has led to pupils taking more exercise and learning how to work as part of a team in organised games. The funding has helped purchase new playground equipment, such as bicycles and go-carts. Pupils are therefore more active and their physical well-being is improved. Opportunities to learn Kung Fu have helped pupils to understand and control their bodies and emotions.
- All pupils make good progress towards their individual behaviour and attendance targets.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137652
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	447361

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	Academy special convertor
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chiamka Ezeiani
Headteacher	Malcolm Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2013
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