

Establishment Context

Our School

Willowbank is an all through non-denominational school for pupils with a wide range of severe and complex additional support needs, situated in Kilmarnock. It is part of the Kilmarnock Learning Group and caters for pupils all over East Ayrshire and sometimes beyond.

Our Pupils

Pupils at Willowbank are given every opportunity to 'be the best that they can be' in a wide range of quality learning experiences in a variety of contexts where they are encouraged to achieve success, be confident and independent at home, at school and in their local community.

The current roll is 116 pupils – 74 primary aged and 64 secondary aged pupils grouped in 16 classes. Our school opened in August 2013. Two pupils have CSPs, 3 pupils have 1-1 supports.

One pupil has a healthcare worker with her at all times.

We provide education for pupils with a wide range of complex additional support needs (ASN) including cognitive and sensory impairments, physical disabilities, communication difficulties and autism spectrum disorders. Some of our pupils have complex exceptional healthcare needs. (CEN).

- 70% of our pupils live in SIMD 1-2 rising to 83% when SIMD 3 is included.
- 38.8% of pupils claim free school meals, although this figure is likely to be higher as pupils in ASN school currently receive free school meals.
- Average attendance is 88.7%. Robust procedures for tracking attendance and addressing any concerns and offering supports are currently in place.

Our pupil profile has changed significantly over the last few years.

ASN Factor	# Pupils	% of Roll	EAC ASN Sector %
Autistic spectrum disorder	62	53.4	45.6
Bereavement	-	-	0.3
Communication Support Needs	34	29.3	31.5
Deaf blind	-	-	-
Dyslexia	-	-	2.5
English as an additional language	2	1.7	1.2
Family Issues	2	1.7	5.2
Hearing impairment	7	6.0	4.3
Interrupted learning	-	-	1.7
Language or speech disorder	27	23.3	20.4
Learning disability	113	97.4	39.5
Looked after	5	4.3	6.1
Mental health problem	2	1.7	2.6
More able pupil	-	-	0.1
Not disclosed / declared	-	-	-
Other	7	6.0	7.2
Other moderate learning difficulty	6	5.2	13.9
Other specific learning difficulty (eg numeric)	1	0.9	10.2
Physical health problem	16	13.8	8.1
Physical or motor impairment	23	19.8	9.5
Risk of Exclusion	-	-	0.4
Social, emotional and behavioural difficulty	30	25.9	35.0
Substance Misuse	-	-	-
Visual impairment	12	10.3	4.7
Young Carer	1	0.9	0.4

Our Staff

The Senior Management Team consists of Head Teacher, Depute Head Teacher, and 2 Principal Teachers. School staff includes teachers, 1 instructor, CAs, admin, janitorial, cleaning and catering staff. Staffing includes 1.2 PE Specialists and 3 CAs funded through PEF to complement our core staffing.

Our Parents

Partnership with parents is a vital part of our work at Willowbank School. We have a supportive Parent Council and forum and a 'Friends of Willowbank' group. We encourage all parents to become involved in the school and their children's learning as much as they can whilst acknowledging this can be difficult for some families. Our Parent Council met regularly throughout the year. We are extremely grateful to those parents and members of the local community who volunteer and support the work of the school. Friends of Willowbank support the school by fundraising. This year the 100x100 Challenges raised funds to upgrade the School Sensory Garden.

Our Partners

The school receives occasional support and advice from a named school nurse with additional support from a multi-agency team including social work, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and other health agencies.

There are also links with other agencies and services who provide outreach support and interventions in expressive arts, physical education, outdoor learning, leisure and recreation and other activities that enrich the curriculum for our children and young people.

Our Community

There is a very supportive local community and the children and young people have re-established links with community resources both within and outwith the town, through social outings, educational visits and regular activities. We have 2 Minibuses.

This year we have developed links with external partner agencies to provide meaningful Work Experience Placements for some of our Senior Phase pupils. For other pupils, we have our Developing the Young Workforce groups where we have the Willowbank Thanks a Latte Café, the Willowbank Spa and the Willowbank Maintenance Group. Pupils were involved in the Recruitment process of applying for a job by completing an application form and attending interview.

Current Challenges

- Pupil numbers are increasing and accommodation is having to be adapted.
- There are no breakout spaces or specialist rooms.
- A continued increase in pupils attending Willowbank with complex autism and significantly distressed and dysregulated behaviours means that the team is having to adapt and learn in order to positively meet the needs of our very diverse school community.
- There have been 366 reportable incidents of Violence, Near Misses and Self Harm this year.
- Five staff have been absent due to incidents of Violence.
- Four incidents have been reported under RIDDOR.
- A continued increase in pupils attending Willowbank with exceptional, complex healthcare needs means that the team is having to adapt and learn in order to positively meet the needs of some very vulnerable young people.
There have been 7 hospital admissions.
There have been 8 incidents of Autonomic Dysreflexia for one of our pupils.
- Financial restraints mean that some partnerships cannot be sustained, as other agencies are also stretched.
- A high number of temporary staff and uncertainty in recruitment and retention brings challenges. However, this session we have been able to offer permanent contracts to some of our temporary CAs, following interview process. This process takes place at the very end of the session which brings a number of challenges. It would be helpful if the staffing conversations and subsequent recruitment take place earlier in the session to avoid this.

Key strengths

The latest HMIE report was published in April 2015, which detailed the following as key strengths:

- Happy, motivated, engaged learners who benefit from the rich communication environment –
Total Communication Approach
- Positive trusting relationships between staff and young people throughout the school.
- Staff's strong sense of teamwork and commitment to providing high-quality learning for children and young people.
- Effective partnership working with parents and other agencies to support and enhance children's learning and achievements.
- The rich, varied and stimulating physical education provision which engages all children and young people.
- The leadership of the senior management team in bringing about improvement

The inspection team used the quality indicators within “How Good Is Our School” to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of the school. Below are the evaluations for our school.

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|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| • Improvements in performance | very good |
| • Learner’s experiences | very good |
| • Meeting learning needs | very good |
| • The curriculum | very good |
| • Improvement through self-evaluation | very good |

A recent Thematic Inspection in Mathematics, May 25, detailed the following key strengths: Positive relationships between children, young people and staff are evident across the school.

- Children and young people feel well supported by staff who are attuned to support them effectively while facilitating them to develop thinking skills to process information.
- The meaningful and relevant maths concepts build in to planned learning, allows children and young people the opportunity to experience a range of mathematic organisers.
- The inclusive environment and the effective use of signifiers to support children and young people understand the environment and navigate through transitions.
- Positive approaches to communication. Children and young people are supported to contribute and use maths vocabulary using AAC and digital devices.
- The range of SQA attainment and achievement opportunities including the spa and café in the senior phase.

Key strengths as assessed by the school:

Feedback from SQA moderation (24/5/25)

- The centre approach to assessment is valid and accepted
- Digital evidence was presented which included clear, relevant photographs, a mix of centre products and ready made worksheets
- The Centre’s assessment judgements were on line with national standards, reliable and accepted
- Clear photographic evidence with and appropriate prompts to ensure the needs of the candidate have been supported effectively.
- All assessments were complete and linked clearly to the unit’s outcomes and assessment standards
- Detailed assessor comments were included on the evidence to indicate assessment judgements made. The evidence was clearly dated on the CAR which linked assessment outcomes.
- There was evidence of the effectiveness of the centre’s internal verification procedures, resulting in a sample for verification that has a high level of consistency.
- The assessment materials were well organised and of an excellent standard. The consistent approach to recording and presenting candidate evidence made verification easy.
- The centre produced an excellent pro forma for internal assessment and moderation.



Establishment Vision, Values and Aims

The Willowbank Way

Provide an exciting, inclusive and communication-rich ethos where every pupil and member of staff is resilient, safe and confident to reach their full potential.

Deliver modern, exciting and innovative teaching which allows every learner to develop their independence, talents and skills and celebrate their successes.

Promote positive relationships, led by highly skilled, nurturing staff who have the confidence and skills to take risks and embrace new ways of thinking.

Embrace the Team With The Family approach, working with all stakeholders to minimise the barriers of Additional Support Needs.

Achieving

Included

Safe

Respected

Nurtured

Healthy

Responsible

Active

Willowbank School

Willowbank School

Be the best you can be

We embrace **The Willowbank Way** and pride ourselves on the school's positive, welcoming and supportive ethos. Our vision, values and aims help us achieve this.

Our school vision is to inspire all pupils, staff and families to **'Be the best you can be'**.

Our school values are in line with "Safe, Health, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible and Included".

<p>Safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel happy and safe. • I know who to go to for help. • I am listened to. 	<p>Healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I eat well and have friends. • I am active and looked after and encouraged to make healthy choices. • I have good mental, physical and emotional health.
<p>Achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am encouraged to be the best I can be. • I develop skills for life. • I get to share and celebrate my talents and achievements. 	<p>Nurtured</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am given opportunities to try new things. • I know that people know me and care for me. • I am nurtured and loved.
<p>Active</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have fun and am active in body and mind. • I get a chance to share my learning and achievements. • I am encouraged to play, explore, create and learn in a way I enjoy. 	<p>Respected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am given a voice and I am listened to. • I make decisions about my school. • I make decisions about my life.
<p>Responsible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can make good choices. • I care about my local and wider environment. • I can help others and take on responsibilities. 	<p>Included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I belong in my class, school and community. • I can help others feel included in play and learning. • I know my individuality, identity and personality are accepted and celebrated.

Following consultation with our school community, our recently refreshed aims are to:

1. Provide an exciting, inclusive and communication-rich ethos where every pupil and member of staff is resilient, confident and safe.
2. Deliver modern, exciting and innovative teaching which allows every learner to develop their independence and celebrate their successes.
3. Embrace the Team With The Family approach, working with all stakeholders to minimise the barriers of additional support needs.
4. Promote positive relationships, led by highly skilled, nurturing staff who have the confidence and skills to take risks and embrace new ways of thinking.



Improvement Priority <i>(Expressed as outcomes for learners)</i>	Improvement Priority <i>(Expressed as outcomes for learners)</i> Improved pupil voice through the development of a range of total communication methods and increased opportunities for staff professional development in Alternative and Augmentative Communication approaches, Autism, Sensory and Play pedagogy.	Education Service Improvement Plan 1: Our Leadership We actively support, promote and enact leadership at all levels. Our young people are supported to be leaders of their learning in our centres, schools and wider life experiences. All staff have ready access to appropriate CLPL and experiences to promote leadership in every classroom, playroom and centre.
Our Leadership		
Progress and Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SymbolStix symbols well established across school. Differentiated and progressive resources in place. Increased pupil independence and engagement. • All new resources use SymbolStix. Evident in school environment (posters), all new door signs and pupil workbooks and worksheets, including SQA. Consistency in approach for pupils, increased predictability – more regulated behaviour. • In-service training sessions for all teaching and non-teaching staff. Tasks issued and peer support in place for staff. Direct impact on pupils. • Makaton training in place for staff, awareness sessions for community partners, parents and taxi drivers/escorts –will provide continuity for pupils and will support a total communication approach. Reduced frustrations, enhanced relationships. Pupils presented to Elected Members at London Road HQ. <i>(Financial barriers are now in place – sustainable model going forward)</i> • PODB implemented by SALT and PT into many classes. Teacher leadership/ownership over resource development. Total Communication approach continues to be developed. Increased pupil voice, self and co-regulation techniques. • Communication Passports in place for all pupils. Collegiate time spent on developing these. Enhanced Communication Passports in place for leavers. SALT providing support to parents of leavers to ensure these are kept up to date. New start P1 parents encouraged to input into basic Communication Passport to aid transition and form basis for fuller Passport. Better information sharing between services, pupils better supported outwith school. • All secondary pupils have studied and gained National 1 English qualifications. College unable to facilitate certified qualifications – to be picked up next year. Refreshed approach in place for next year to enhance moderation and monitoring/tracking. • Training in place for staff, through collegiate and in-service. Medical, sensory needs, specific conditions. Deeper staff understanding – enhanced pupil experiences. • Increased family attendance at cafes, learning events and engagement in Learning Journals: increased parental engagement and pupil enjoyment and choice. 	
Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent teaching and learning within inclusive classrooms. • Learner-centred improvements. • Strengthened home-school partnerships. • Coherent tracking of progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled professional dialogue, team teaching, learning walks and classroom observations. • Further development of the Excellent Lesson framework. • Refresh our approach to self-evaluation using HGIOS4 through working group and whole school activities. • Take on board feedback from authority Learning Visits and ensure all staff are empowered to take on leadership roles relating to this. • Regular, accessible and inclusive family learning events, track and monitor attendance, using data to inform planning and promote inclusive engagement strategies. • Embed use of Learning Journals for both general curriculum tracking as well as ILP target progress. 	

Improvement Priority <i>(Expressed as outcomes for learners)</i>	Improvement Priority <i>(Expressed as outcomes for learners)</i> Pupils will benefit from a curriculum which is rich in content and individualised. Staff will participate in training and development activities to increase their confidence, skills and knowledge.	Education Service Improvement Plan Priority 2: Teaching and Learning Together Our young people should experience a teaching, learning and curriculum offer that meets their needs, and those of our local and national context. All staff should be supported to deliver in new and innovative ways by accessing CLPL relevant to their needs and those of our young people.
Teaching and Learning Together		
Progress and Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will provide real-life contexts for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering numeracy Mathematics) through IDL, Enterprise and Developing the Young Workforce opportunities across the school (in-house, Park School links, external partners and providers). All Senior Phase pupils were given opportunities for pupils to work in DYW Projects, Spa, school café projects, garden, DIY (class/school, family engagement, .(PEF) Pupils engaged in the Recruitment process – adverts, application forms and interviews. Increased confidence, All Secondary Staff are using Learning Journals is being used online assessment/reporting tool. The majority of Senior Phase pupils linked with Ayrshire College providing our pupils with the opportunity to experience and access college, alongside peers from Hillside, in a safe setting to achieve. Most Senior Phase pupils participated in external Work Experience. We created links with local community business partners in order to Develop the Young Workforce through engaging and meaningful work experience opportunities providing inhouse, outhouse (where appropriate) work experience for our Secondary pupils developing links with the local community, partners and parents Almost all teachers engaged in play visits. Staff engaged in realising the ambition and play pedagogy including schematic play to support learning and teaching. Almost all staff continue to develop planning and assessment for foundation milestone and mile stone learners to capture the small steps in learning. The majority of staff develop a creative, innovative curriculum offer which reflects the needs of learners – ensure “excellent lessons” and “excellent experience” for all pupils. 	
Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased opportunities for literacy and communication development. Increased opportunities for learning through play across the school Improved awareness of and incorporation of strategies from support agencies. Increased opportunity for staff leadership leading to enhanced curriculum experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal Teachers of Literacy and Communication. Staff training to develop confidence and skills in signing, symbol use (including PODD) and AAC devices, across all learning environments. Use of Letterland phonics, ensuring consistency across primary. Develop a literacy programme focused on life skills and real-world functional literacy across secondary. Scheduled professional dialogue, training, team teaching and learning walks. Scheduled CLPL sessions and coaching with the Teacher of the Deaf, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, Speech and Language Therapist, Social Work Team Leader, Educational Psychology, Visual Impairment Teacher, professional dialogue and learning walks. All partner agencies will be requested to contribute meaningfully to the Child’s Plan in the format of Pupil Passports or any other meaningful format. All staff will be part of a Working Group and have assigned designated distributed leadership responsibilities. 	

Improvement Priority <i>(Expressed as outcomes for learners)</i>	Improvement Priority <i>(Expressed as outcomes for learners)</i> Pupils will be given equity of choice within their school and local community to encourage them to participate their fullest ability and potential	Education Service Improvement Plan Priority 3: Our Wellbeing and Belonging We want all of our young people to feel supported by people who know them well, and feel included in all of our schools and centres. Our staff need to be supported in their working with our young people, especially in times of adversity. As a key universal service, it is our vision that all young people attend our establishments on a full-time and regular basis to support them in their development at all stages.
Our Wellbeing and Belonging		
Progress and Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Senior Phase pupils engaged in the residential experience to secondary pupils. (PEF) • The majority of families engaged with supporting the Cost of Living Crisis when planning events, opportunities and experiences. We will ensure no financial barriers exclude any pupil or family from any experience. • The majority staff engaged in staff opportunities for leadership roles linked to school priorities and all staff were appointed Champions in areas of sustainable development.(PEF) • We will continue to engage with sustainable development opportunities to allow us to celebrate wider achievements – Eco Schools, RRS, Fairtrade, LGBTQ+ Charter, Sports Scotland Award, Green Tree School and DofE. 	
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced incidents of violence and aggression and self-harm. • Promote outdoor learning, wellbeing and connection to nature. • Further development of a Gypsy/Traveller supportive school community. • Further development of an inclusive, trauma-informed environment for Care-Experienced young people. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use dysregulation trackers in consultation with Educational Psychology, with regular analysis to inform Safe Plans • Exploration of Health and Wellbeing tracker. • Develop the garden space to become a valuable teaching and learning space. • Parental engagement and parent-led staff learning and engagement with The Gypsy/Traveller and Roma Pledge for Scottish Schools. • Celebration of Gypsy/Traveller culture through class topics, assemblies and visible wall displays and books. • 90% of staff will be trained in the Promise to Level 3 • All class and school activities and events will take account of the needs of the diverse range of families we have across our school community, including single parents and LGBT+ people, care-experienced pupils and Gypsy/Travellers. 	

Improvement Priority <i>(Expressed as outcomes for learners)</i>	Improvement Priority <i>(Expressed as outcomes for learners)</i> Raising Attainment – Assessment Improved assessment approaches through development of Learning Journals tracking tools.	Education Service Improvement Plan Priority 4: Our Attainment, Destinations and Achievements We want the very best for all of our young people in East Ayrshire. We aim to ensure that all young people secure a positive destination through excellent achievement and attainment at all levels.
Our Attainment, Destinations and Achievements		
Progress and Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most staff have demonstrated a significant focus on self-evaluation using How Good Is Our School? including during class meetings and whole school meetings. Results shared with all staff. Refined approach in place for next session. Teachers and Classroom Assistants encouraged to engage with the language of HGIOS and become confident in its everyday use. • All teachers supported to self-evaluated their own and others' practice. Learning Visits, Learning Walks and Collegiate Discussion time facilitated. Internal Moderation has been the focus, including National Qualifications. • External moderation partner identified (Southcraig School). No moderation been completed. • The majority of teachers have further explored our approaches to tracking and monitoring. Milestones and Benchmarks continue to be a focus and staff report against these for all observations. ILPs refreshed to focus more on language of CFE. Annual Reports streamlined and modernised. All teachers fully engaged and prefer new format. • All staff are using Learning Journals. This is fully embedded within the school at the main forum of communication. Classroom Assistant staff are involved in the reporting and tracking process, families have better understanding of what their children/young people are learning in school and how to support at home. 	
Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote pupil leadership and confidence. • Increased pupil attendance. • To enhance transition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen partnerships with St Andrews Primary School through joint initiatives. • Regular parental engagement, weekly monitoring and monthly data analysis, full implementation of Supporting Attendance policy which was piloted last session. • Provide an extensive, meaningful and supportive transition programme for ECC → P1 which includes parents and wider families. • Develop and distribute a parental support checklist and facilitate a structured parental information session. • Actively gather pupil voice, identify personal interests and engage families in setting long- term goals to inform future adult provisions planning. • To continue to make use of the Independent Review Group to ensure correct placement of pupils in order to best meet their educational needs. 	

Pupil Equity Fund: Evaluation		
Approach/Intervention	Impact Report on how you have improved outcomes for learners impacted by poverty	What evidence do you have of positive impact? Outline the data that supports your findings.
<i>To provide additional resources to support teaching and learning</i>	<p>Pupils have enjoyed fun swims</p> <p>Pupils and families have benefited from food packages, toy and clothing during the winter months.</p> <p>Pupils have engaged in rebound sessions to support wellbeing.</p> <p>Pupils have confidently, with support, engaged in outings to local parks, amenities and local environment</p>	<p>EVOLVE Data, Swimming sessions, Hydro Sessions, Pupil dysregulation trackers. Incident reports</p> <p>Staff recruited until June 2025 – pupils better supported to access the curriculum and achieve, Supporting health and wellbeing activities such as outings, hydro, swimming, rebound and MOVE.</p> <p>Parental engagement – family recipes/Cost of Living fund/Grant to support</p>
Play Pedagogy	<p>Staff attended training to enhance their knowledge.</p> <p>Training delivered to all teachers.</p> <p>Two classrooms set up.</p> <p>Pupil play walks – engagement and interaction</p>	<p>Pupil, staff and parent feedback, Observations, Staff Questionnaires</p> <p>Key staff went on training.</p> <p>Delivered sessions to staff and learning walks for all pupils and almost all staff.</p>
<i>Resources</i>	<i>To provide additional resources to support teaching and learning</i>	<p>Resources, Observations, Pupil, Staff and Parent feedback</p> <p>Items purchased so support literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, parental engagement and staff CLPL/training – up-to-date, age- and stage appropriate learning materials providing motivation and engagement. Makaton training, social stories, AAC, nurture, autism and MOVE training, play, sensory and outdoor.</p>

Establishment Self Evaluation: How Good is Our School? 4 Quality Indicators	
Quality Indicator 1.3 Leadership of Change	4.5
Quality Indicator 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment	4
Quality Indicator 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion	5
Quality Indicator 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement	5

Establishment Capacity for Improvement
<p><u>Attainment and Achievement</u></p> <p><i>Successes and Achievements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singing Hands Performances –two face to face performances • Rebound Therapy Centre of Excellence – Renewed • MOVE – Centre of Excellence – Training provider for other schools • Willowbank Dancefest – Joseph Senior Phase Performance • Willowbank Strictly 2025 • Friends of Willowbank Christmas Market, Summer Fun Day and 100 x 100 Challenge • Attendance Policy and monthly audits/staged interventions • 99% targets achieved by 116 pupils • 288 Social Educational Outings in the local community • 44 pupils achieved 140 SQA awards at Nat 1 • 8 pupils achieved an SQA award at Nat 2 • 8 pupils attended the Residential • Work Experience – Inhouse and Lounge Café • Makaton HQ Session with Elected Members • Updated shared rationale; vision, value and aims, reviewed in consultation with all stakeholders. • Updated School Logo • Finalists in Diversity Awards • Residential In School Sleepover • Swimming with Kilmarnock Jets • UNCRC Charters, The Promise Charters • Lounge Café Work Experience – 6 pupils attended independently • Team with the Family approach – a holistic, multi-agency approach is embedded and supports children and their families. • Supporting families and pupils with Cost of Living – Packages, Toy Drive, Clothes Exchange • Total communication approach giving all pupils a voice. • Health and wellbeing a core element of curriculum and school ethos – Rebound, MOVE, Outdoor Learning, Hydro Therapy, Swimming, The Promise, UNCRC Charters • Collaborative, multi-agency and engagement work with partners, providers and parents. • Commitment from senior management to support CLPL across all staff and distributed leadership across all staff.



Residential 2025



Prom 2025