

# Vernon House School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	101581
<b>Local authority</b>	Brent
<b>Inspection number</b>	376594
<b>Inspection dates</b>	31 January – 1 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Paul Scott HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	14
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Kumud Deshmukh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Lucy Addington
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	Drury Way Neasden London NW10 0NQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8451 6961
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<b>Age group</b>	5–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	31 January – 1 February 2012
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Paul Scott

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. All teachers were observed teaching, with over five hours of observation time. Meetings were held with parents and carers, governors and staff. Pupils' views were gathered and their work in books was scrutinised. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's progress-tracking information, school records relating to behaviour management and other records and documentation. The questionnaires returned from eight parents and carers were considered as part of the inspection evidence.

## Information about the school

Vernon House School is a very small special school for primary-aged pupils with behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Some children also have additional learning needs. The school is designated as a mixed school but at the time of the inspection only boys were on the school roll. The school profile is changing, with pupils with more profound and complex needs, moderate learning difficulties, oppositional defiance disorder (ODD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The school is currently consulting stakeholders about developing provision further to cater for pupils with autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) who are capable of accessing the mainstream curriculum with specialist support and increasing the number of admissions in the school. Pupils do not often join the school at the start of Year 1 but join at a range of times during Key Stage 1 and 2. Around two thirds of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. A large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages. Around one in five pupils has a first language believed not to be English.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school, with a team of staff who work well together with a passion for ensuring pupils' individual needs are met.
- Pupils are making increasing progress as learning opportunities are well matched to their individual learning needs.
- The management of behaviour is highly effective and encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own actions and so contribute to the learning in the school.
- Teaching in the school has many strengths, including personalised support and challenges, and the development of literacy skills which help pupils to access the wider curriculum.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together in the classrooms and plan appropriate learning opportunities. Learning objectives are not always refined enough to allow the highest rates of progress.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and committed. They work well with the pupils and provide, along with teachers, very positive role models with a high level of consistency. They model the behaviour the school values, which is readily adopted by the pupils.
- The school has a clear system for tracking attainment over time, which is used effectively to improve pupils' progress. The school is aware of the need to refine assessment strategies in the classroom to inform the next stages of learning.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities to develop pupils' social skills, sense of fairness and understanding of right and wrong. Assembly singing was uplifting and pupils participated with passion and contributed individually to the positive school ethos.
- Leaders in the school have developed a positive ethos in the school, with clear ambition for excellence at all levels. They have prioritised the development of teaching to ensure pupils make rapid progress in their learning.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment of and increase their progress by;
  - sharpening learning objectives for lessons
  - using continuous assessment more to refine the support for pupils and inform them of their next steps in learning.
  
- Analyse school data, interventions and processes to a greater depth to ensure that leaders at all levels can refine school systems further to improve their impact on pupils' learning.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Leaders and the school staff have worked hard to ensure that pupils' progress has improved over time, with a clear emphasis on meeting the needs of individuals. The school tracks pupils' progress accurately and is able to demonstrate the good progress pupils make. Pupils observed in lessons readily engage in learning because they feel safe in the caring environment that teachers and teaching assistants establish. Pupils work effectively with all adults on tasks that are generally adjusted to make sure they are suitably challenging for individual pupils. During one phonics (linking sounds and letters) lesson pupils made outstanding progress as the task enabled them to work towards their individual targets. Support for learning by teachers and teaching assistants gave a security and confidence to pupils, with high expectations of them to think independently. During another lesson, the teacher encouraged a pupil to construct an argument about phonics to deepen his understanding. The teamwork of adults and positive role modelling in the classroom were impressive and highly effective. Adults regularly externalised their thoughts and feelings to ensure pupils had a clear understanding of the impact of their actions. This was also echoed by pupils and helped to ensure that even when behaviour issues arose, they were quickly dispelled calmly and professionally. Where progress was slower, the objectives of lessons were not as sharply focused and the assessment of pupils' work was not refined enough to identify fully the next steps for learning. Parents and carers who expressed views agree with the inspection observations that the vast majority of teaching secures good progress.

Many of the pupils have had significant disruption to their learning prior to joining Vernon House School. Pupils join the school at a variety of times throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Their attainment on entry to the school is usually significantly below that expected for their age. Attainment, including reading, is well below the national average by the end of Year 2 and when they leave the school, but is rising. Pupils increasingly enjoy reading and are able to access the wider curriculum with greater success because of the emphasis placed on developing their literacy skills. Some pupils are now back on track for attaining the standards expected for their age as the overall progress they make in the school is good and improving.

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## Quality of teaching

There have been significant changes in staffing over the last few years. The teachers and teaching assistants work extremely well together in the school to ensure pupils are supported effectively in their learning. Parents and carers agree that teaching is now good. Adults have a very good understanding of individual learners and so are able to tailor the provision well. Although at times learning objectives are not always sufficiently finely tuned, all lessons were planned around pupils' individual targets, and the tasks supported both their academic and personal development. Teachers and other adults demonstrate a passion for learning and exceptional skills in managing behaviour. Lessons remain calm and focused on learning even when pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour.

Teachers and adults reinforce the inclusive ethos of the school exceptionally well. During lessons, adults are attuned particularly well to the emotional states of pupils and adjust their support appropriately. Observations showed that, at times, this was just a case of sitting with pupils or pre-empting stressful situations and de-escalating them before an issue erupts.

Teachers' assessment is effective and information from the tracking of progress is being used with increasing impact to identify gaps in learning and to inform planning. When joining the school, many pupils need to develop positive learning attitudes and social skills to enable their full participation. This they do very well. These attributes are integrated well alongside academic targets but teachers do not always analyse their progress in these areas fully. Numeracy across the curriculum is not as well developed as literacy, but is improving and developing well. Teachers use a wide range of opportunities to enhance learning. Pupils talked with enthusiasm about their visit to the British Museum which supported their project on Egypt. The school pantomime 'Cinderfella' also had a positive impact on pupils' progress and enjoyment of learning, as well as showing to parents and carers the progress they have made and the confidence they have gained.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils settle quickly into school life and appreciate the caring environment that enables them to engage in learning opportunities and to enjoy learning. The school uses a wide range of activities to reinforce the pupils' sense of fairness and a strong moral code of conduct. Clear boundaries, high expectations and a consistency and persistence in modelling the desired behaviour have ensured that pupils' behaviour is now good. The ethos of the school encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils are polite and contribute well to the learning in the classroom. Some pupils find it difficult to control their behaviour all of the time but when issues do arise they quickly accept the need to repair relationships and return quickly to learning.

There has been a significant reduction in the number of exclusions and in other

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incidents in the school. Pupils are increasingly successful and work hard to stay on a positive path. They feel safe in the school and any form of bullying and racist incidents are rare. The school has strong systems for reparation which are used effectively so that pupils' focus on learning is maintained. Pupils have a good understanding of risks and are able to make sensible choices about keeping themselves safe. Parents and carers consider that behaviour and safety in the school are good. Just over half of the pupils said behaviour is good sometimes; the rest felt behaviour was good more often.

Attendance of some pupils is much higher than average but some pupils do not attend regularly enough to gain full benefit from the opportunities available in the school. The school works hard to improve attendance and is having an increasing impact on reducing unnecessary absence.

### **Leadership and management**

The clear and effective leadership of the headteacher and senior team has established a strong ethos and clear ambition for school improvement. School staff feel they are part of an effective team and morale is high. Improving the quality of teaching and learning has been a key priority. Teaching is monitored well to ensure pupils' experiences are positive. Leaders know the strengths of teachers and have improved teaching significantly. They have clear strategies for developing the quality of teaching further. All staff reported that they feel that their professional development is appropriately catered for and has improved the impact they have in the classroom. Behaviour management training for all staff has resulted in a highly consistent approach which ensures lessons are productive.

The school has developed good progress-tracking and assessment systems which now inform teachers' planning and give an accurate picture of each pupil's progress. Leaders are aware of the need to analyse further the impact of interventions and support to refine practice. There is an effective phonics strategy in the school to promote reading.

The clear improvement in teaching, assessment, behaviour and the development of the positive learning environment since the last inspection demonstrate the school's strong capacity for further improvement.

Effective systems in the school support pupils' safety well. Safeguarding measures meet requirements and staff receive appropriate training. Governors support and challenge the school's leaders and monitor their work. This monitoring does not always assist the review and evaluation of the deeper impact of practice but is developing.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination very effectively so that all pupils feel valued in the school. Communication with parents is very effective. Parents and carers explained how approachable and helpful staff are, not only in helping their sons to make progress but also in helping them to gain access to

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services for themselves and so better support their child.

The school provides a highly personalised curriculum which is broad and balanced. It is enhanced with a range of visits, such as a recent visit to observe sea life aquariums and a residential visit. The range of topics covered has stimulated pupils to create artwork inspired by Gaudi and models showing the cross-section of the earth.

Pupils' social and moral development is at the heart of all of the school's work. Spiritual and cultural experiences are celebrated and developed well. During assemblies, success was highlighted and pupils gained the opportunity to come together as a community. The singing was particularly good at ensuring that pupils reflected on the wider world and enjoyed a strong, uplifting and inspiring atmosphere.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



2 February 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Vernon House School, Neasden NW10 0NQ**

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to me when I came to your school. I enjoyed meeting you all and seeing you enjoying your work. I was very impressed with the way you were able to work very hard and, even when you found things difficult, kept working and repaired quickly when things did not go quite to plan.

Your behaviour adds a lot to lessons and I think you have some very skilled teachers and teaching assistants who really care about you and want you to be successful. Vernon House is a good school because the staff work together so well and show you how you can behave to be successful. Lessons are well organised and give you all the opportunity to make good progress. We think that the teachers' plans, if refined further, will help you to make even better progress. We also think that leaders can look carefully at how well things are working for you in even greater detail.

The headteacher does a very good job in leading the school and is determined, along with the senior leaders and all of the staff, to make things even better. You can help in this by making sure you always take responsibility for your actions and repair relationships quickly when you do not behave in the way you know you should.

You are making good progress and some of you have already reached the standards expected of pupils of your age. This has made up for some of the disruptions to your learning you experienced before starting at Vernon House School. Those of you who attend regularly know the success this has brought. It is important that you keep up your attendance.

You have left me with some really positive memories. Your singing really stood out and it was so good to listening to you and seeing you as a whole school working together and playing together. I wish you well for the future in all that you do.

Yours sincerely

Paul Scott  
Her Majesty's Inspector



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