

# Valley Road School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	123041
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	380579
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Barbara Atcheson

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	236
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Haq
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tim Coulson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Valley Road Henley-on-Thames RG9 1RR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01491 573784
<b>Fax number</b>	01491 637776
<b>Email address</b>	Office.2512@valley-road.oxon.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	23–24 February 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	380579



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Barbara Atcheson

Additional inspector

Philip Scull

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in intervention sessions for individuals and small groups and 18 lessons, taught by nine teachers. They also held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding and equality, minutes of governing body meetings, and planning documents. They scrutinised pupils' work and evaluated questionnaires returned from 127 parents and carers, as well as others returned by staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

The school is of average size. Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are very few disabled pupils or pupils who have special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage by joining either the school's Nursery or Reception Year class depending on their age. The school has eight places for children from a local special school in its Nursery. Both the present headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed since the previous inspection. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. There is a private extended day-care facility on the site, which is inspected separately.

**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. It is a warm, welcoming, cohesive community, where pupils, staff, and leaders share a passion for improvement and strive to help each other to do even better. They want to be an outstanding school. Senior leaders know that the reason it is not outstanding currently is that more work has to be done to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and accelerate the progress of more able pupils.
- Pupils achieve well and reach levels of attainment that are significantly above average by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Relationships are good and teachers motivate pupils. They use their own good subject knowledge well, but inconsistencies in the use of assessment exist and not all teachers have high-enough expectations of how well the more-able pupils can achieve and this can have a limiting effect on those pupils' progress. Skilled teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- Pupils' considerate, respectful, and courteous behaviour makes a positive contribution to the safe, happy and friendly school ethos. As a result, the special school Nursery children, who add a rich dimension to the school, integrate seamlessly.
- Senior leaders work well as a team. They manage the performance of the school well and lead and manage teaching effectively. Well-focused professional development has led to improving pupils' achievement in mathematics. Senior managers communicate high aspirations consistently. Although the school has developed effective procedures to monitor and evaluate the performance of pupils and staff, these have yet to be implemented fully.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
  - all teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are raised so that more-able pupils are suitably challenged
  - all teachers use assessment accurately on a day-to-day basis to plan

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- effectively for the full range of pupils' abilities
- all senior leaders monitor the assessment and planning rigorously and provide feedback to teachers and points for action.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has been significantly above average for the past four years. The pupils achieve well because usually teachers support pupils effectively in lessons and use their subject knowledge well to develop pupils' learning. However, on the rare occasions when expectations are not sufficiently high, especially for the more-able pupils, progress slows.

Small learning groups, often using practical activities and taken by skilled teaching assistants, make sure that any learning gap between the lowest 20% of pupils and the rest is closed quickly. This was seen clearly in a small group of Year 2 pupils who were working on halving and doubling numbers. They divided 20 toy animals randomly between two halves of a circle. They soon realised that half of 20 was ten, as a result of good questioning by the teaching assistant. By the end of the session, their understanding of halving and doubling numbers up to 20 was secure.

Pupils say they are learning as much as they can. An overwhelming majority of parents and carers, correctly, recognise that their children are making good progress. They welcome the all-round education that the school promotes. One parent, voicing the views of many, said 'My oldest boy is not only challenged academically, but has also had a wide range of experiences which will equip him for life outside the classroom.' Boys and girls achieve very similar results in all subjects. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers because of the consistent approach of all staff.

Good teaching of reading, writing and mathematical skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a secure foundation upon which they can build. Exciting, enjoyable experiences give them time to practise and consolidate what they have learned. An early emphasis on speaking and listening and a good understanding of letter sounds mean that, by the time they are six, pupils read confidently. By the end of Year 2, attainment in reading is above average. Pupils read fluently, referring back to the text to answer questions and making informed choices about their reading. Year 6 pupils read confidently at levels above those expected. They can express and justify their reading and author preferences and explain the key features, using detailed explanation with appropriate terminology, of how language is used.

### Quality of teaching

Evidence from the inspection supports the views of the overwhelming majority of pupils and parents and carers, that teaching is good. The way that teachers' plan

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work enthuses pupils so that they want to learn and interact in a positive way. Pupils enjoy 'curriculum weeks', when work is planned on a theme across key stages and older pupils work alongside younger pupils. They also enjoy the practical aspects of learning, found, for example, in mathematical investigations. Children in the Reception class were totally engaged in an exciting 'Tiger Hunt' in the outdoor area. They learned the correct words quickly to describe where they found clues, 'under the box', or 'on top of the sand tray'.

Effective teaching strategies, together with appropriately targeted support, match most pupils' needs so that they learn well in all aspects of the curriculum. Assessment is usually used well to plan meaningful tasks, which are matched well to pupils' different abilities. Even so, on rare occasions, work provided for the more-able pupils is not sufficiently challenging. Teachers' good use of questioning deepens pupils' understanding and helps to develop a range of skills in communication, reading, writing, and mathematics. Where teachers keep a constant check on pupils' learning through the lesson, the pace of progress accelerates.

All adults are good role models. Pupils develop good social and moral skills through copying the examples of adults and in the way in which they are taught to respect one another and work together. Well-planned opportunities for reflection help pupils to make connections between aspects of their learning and explore feelings and emotions. This was seen clearly when Year 6 pupils listened to a piece of music in a literacy lesson, as they visualised scenarios that would engage the reader. The fast pace of learning typifies lessons where the teaching is outstanding. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils rose to the challenge as they used mental calculations to help them round Olympic diving times to the nearest tenth of a second. Quick, mini-plenary sessions and spot checks on pupils' learning kept them on their toes, highly engaged and highly enthusiastic. Well-deployed teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They know the pupils well and are skilful in gauging the correct level of support pupils requiring extra help need in order to make similar good progress to all other pupils.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils and parents and carers agree that behaviour is good and the school is a safe place to be. Pupils who have been at the school from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to Year 6 are adamant that the school has always been happy and safe and that pupils want to learn and help each other. Pupils who are new to the school say it is very friendly and that they settled in quickly because they felt welcomed. Pupils say that there are a few lessons when pupils can lose concentration. Although pupils' attention wavered on a very few occasions when work was too easy or the pace of learning dropped, behaviour in and around school over the course of the inspection was never less than good.

Attendance is above average because pupils enjoy school, have a positive attitude to learning, and lose no time in settling down to work. Older pupils enjoy helping younger ones and bonds have grown through curriculum weeks when they all work together.

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Children in the Nursery work happily with children from the special school and an ethos of mutual respect has been nurtured successfully throughout the school. Assemblies have ensured that pupils have a good awareness of different types of bullying and know what to do if ever they come across it. They say they feel safe because there is very little bullying of any kind in the school, including the physical, cyber, and emotional types. They know that there will always be someone who will listen to them and take swift, effective action should they ever be the subject of bullying.

## Leadership and management

Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, share the headteacher's focus on continual improvement. As a result of managing the school's performance well, pupils have continually made good progress and the school has maintained significantly high levels of attainment in Year 6 for the last four years. Both recommendations from the last inspection report have been met. Self-evaluation is good. The school is quick to tackle areas of weakness. Attainment in mathematics rose to significantly above average, following initiatives that the school implemented successfully. All of this confirms the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.

Although teaching is good, monitoring and evaluation have not yet eliminated the inconsistencies that prevent it from becoming outstanding. Teachers say that the impact of professional development has been positive. Special educational needs training has greatly improved the quality of teaching. Middle leaders have been empowered by the leadership training that they have received and this in turn played an integral part in boosting attainment in mathematics in 2011 through the successful implementation of a whole-school calculation policy.

The curriculum is good and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well. It is based on a two-year rolling programme so that all areas are covered and none repeated. It ensures that all pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and the importance of respecting the views of others. Themed curriculum weeks provide unique opportunities for social interaction across the school as pupils work with different year groups. Events such as Black History Month and visits to different places of worship promote pupils' cultural awareness successfully.

The high level of support given to the special school Nursery children within the school, which allows them to access all that is on offer within the school, demonstrates that the promotion of equality of opportunity is at the heart of all the school's work. There is no evidence of discrimination. Staff are trained in the Equality Act 2010 and school policies ensure that they know and understand how to prevent and tackle all types of bullying and harassment. The governing body plays an important strategic role in this and is involved thoroughly in the whole work of the school. It also makes sure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

## 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.**



25 February 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Valley Road School, Henley-on-Thames RG9 1RR**

Thank you for being so friendly when we came to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. You were very helpful and polite. Your school gives you a good standard of education and, because there are a lot of things your school does well, you all make good progress.

Thank you for filling in the questionnaire. We know from that and from what you told us that you enjoy school and that you feel very safe. We were impressed with your good behaviour and enjoyed seeing some of your interesting lessons. We were pleased to see that you understand how important it is to come to school regularly. We could see that you get on with each other well and help the school to run smoothly.

Your headteacher and other staff know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better. We have asked the school to make sure that all teachers expect only your very best work and give those of you who find work easy the right level of work to help you improve. We have asked senior leaders to check that all this is happening and talk to teachers about how they can improve their work. We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and try your hardest to do your very best all the time so that you are even more successful in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Atcheson  
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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