

# Vernon Park Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106082
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	355883
<b>Inspection dates</b>	31 January 2011–1 February 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marie Cordey

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	293
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Walter Brett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Helen Mastrodonardo
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Peak Street Stockport Cheshire SK1 2NF
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 480 4378
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 480 8809
<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@vernonpark.stockport.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed 12 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation evidence, the school improvement plan and internal and external monitoring reports of the school's work. Inspectors also analysed 59 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and also questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well pupils achieve, particularly in mathematics.
- How effective teaching is in engaging and challenging all pupils.
- How well children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Whether pupils' attendance is good enough to promote pupils' learning effectively.

## Information about the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and a small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The school has gained Healthy School status. It provides extended services including a speech and language centre for early years children from across the borough and a breakfast and after-school club. These are managed and run by the governing body.

**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

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Pupils are looked after well and this is reflected in their good behaviour and thoughtfulness for others. They are exceptionally polite and welcoming. Pupils receive good care and support and this promotes their good personal development. Pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem because of the good support for their welfare, particularly those identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. They also feel very safe because of good safeguarding arrangements. The school's vigorous promotion of community cohesion enhances their social and cultural development as well as promoting pupils' good contributions to their community. They are keen ambassadors for leading healthy lifestyles and relish the many sporting opportunities provided for them. Thanks to the school's actions, attendance has improved to be in-line with the average. Leaders have accurately identified the need to sustain and improve this by further involving parents and carers in ensuring their children attend school regularly.

Pupils' starting points in Year 1 vary from year to year but are mostly broadly average. Their attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. They make satisfactory progress. The pupils are eager to learn but teaching has not focused sufficiently on improving their ability to investigate and solve mathematical problems. The quality of teaching is variable but satisfactory overall and in some lessons is good and better. In the better lessons, a high level of challenge is made realistic and exciting by skilled teaching. When teaching is weaker, this limits pupils' progress. In particular, the quality of planning to take account of what pupils already know and understand, so it is matched to their learning needs and interests, is inconsistent. As a result, some pupils do not build on what they can already do and some struggle to understand how to move forward in their learning. Sometimes, teachers speak for too long in lessons and opportunities are missed to involve pupils more in their learning.

Children settle down happily in the Nursery and Reception classes because they are welcomed and nurtured. However, opportunities for children to develop their independence by playing and learning outdoors are limited. Daily routines to enable children to take part in the many activities on offer are not embedded sufficiently to guide children to explore all areas of learning. The application of the school's strategies to improve the quality and accuracy of the assessment of children's learning is improving. This is at an early stage and there is some inconsistency among staff when identifying the next steps in children's learning.

Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and new plans to improve pupils' mathematical skills are beginning to have an impact. Consequently, after a period of time when pupils' attainment has stayed at a similar level it has now begun to rise. As a result, the school's capacity to sustain improvement is satisfactory.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Raise attainment, especially in mathematics, and accelerate pupils' progress by:
  - focusing on the pupils' ability to investigate and solve mathematical problems as highlighted in the school's strategies for improvement
  - improving planning to match that of the best in order to take account of pupils' prior learning.
- Increase the proportion of lessons that are good or better by:
  - ensuring greater consistency in planning across the school that meets the needs and interests of all pupils
  - balancing the length of time that teachers talk in some lessons with more opportunity for pupils to be involved in their learning.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - providing more planned opportunities for children to learn and play outdoors in order to develop their independence
  - focusing more on promoting day-to-day routines to guide children to explore all the different areas of learning
  - improving the quality and accuracy of assessment so that all staff can identify the next steps in children's learning.
- Improve attendance by building on the success of the school's actions to raise attendance through further involving parents and carers in ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning when they are very clear about what they need to do and they have opportunities to take part in practical activities. This is evident in their pride and sense of achievement when they succeed in applying the principles of mathematics to challenging tasks. In these lessons they are whole heartedly focused on achieving their best possible work. In one lesson, the pupils were at turns frustrated, yet ultimately thrilled, to fulfil their teacher's aim of producing 3D mathematical shapes. When there are fewer opportunities to be challenged, they progress at a slower rate.

Pupils' attainment is broadly average and it is most assured in reading and writing. A school focus on raising standards for more-able pupils has led to a significant improvement in pupils' attainment at Level 5, particularly in English. Pupils' skills in mathematics are beginning to improve, especially in mental arithmetic. This is because of the effectiveness of the school's actions to improve pupils' basic skills in mathematics, although the school recognises that there are more improvements yet to be made. Pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their achievement and enjoyment overall is satisfactory. Some pupils'

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progress is good, for example, pupils who have one-to-one tuition or those who are supported to develop their reading in small groups.

Pupils are eager to describe their many positions of responsibility ranging from play leaders to members of the eco committee. They apply their roles both to school and the community through picking up litter in school and the local area. Pupils enjoy celebrating the diversity of people from different walks of life through cooking international dishes and by contributing to attractive wall displays, which include those which refer to different faiths and cultures.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons, pupils are given time to reflect through a planned 'pause for thought'. Teachers know precisely how well their pupils have achieved since the beginning of Year 1 and usually plan work to ensure that they reach challenging targets by the end of Year 6. This is not a consistent practice across the school and consequently, some pupils do not know exactly what is required of them and some are not challenged sufficiently in order to reach their potential. Most pupils understand how to improve their work because their next steps in learning are made very clear but this is also not a consistent feature throughout the school.

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The curriculum adequately meets the needs and interests of pupils. Leaders and governors have purposefully concentrated on providing a creative curriculum to enrich pupils' lives. Consequently, there is a wide variety of educational visits and sporting activities which are much appreciated by pupils and their parents and carers. Curriculum planning is variable in quality and is least effective when it does not sufficiently take into account what pupils have learnt previously. Provision for information and communication technology has been improved, although there are still too few computers to guarantee that pupils will not have to share.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are confident and assured because of the personal support they receive from dedicated teachers, teaching assistants and learning mentors. The school works effectively with outside agencies to support the most vulnerable families, to ensure the safety of all pupils and to improve attendance. Pupils settle down quickly and contentedly when they move into Year 1 because they are well prepared and welcomed. A busy and active breakfast club was observed where pupils made a good start to their day. They receive good care in the after-school club.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are leadership and management?**

A clear focus on improvement is beginning to have an effect on pupils' achievement, although it is too early to see the full impact. Leaders, members of the governing body and staff care deeply about their school and are determined to raise pupils' attainment through setting challenging targets. Differences between subjects and in pupils' attainment in mathematics, for example, are beginning to narrow because of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. There is a firm commitment to tackling discrimination which is based on the promotion of respect for people from all walks of life. Safeguarding arrangements go beyond national requirements especially in staff training and in the serious way it is regarded by the governing body, pupils and their parents and carers, and staff. The governing body is seeking to recruit new members and is very involved in school life. The management of finances is shrewd and the school is very effective in bidding for extra funds to promote pupils' well-being. The governing body is increasingly challenging the school's performance. The promotion of community cohesion is a strength of the school's work because of the wide contribution to a range of activities at local, national and international level. As well as links with local schools there is a close partnership with a school in Sweden.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in the Nursery with skills that are variable ranging from below to broadly in line with those that are typical for their age. Progress is satisfactory overall and children make good progress in their personal development. Teaching quality is satisfactory overall but is particularly effective in improving children's confidence and their social skills. Relationships are positive and children are safe and well cared for in this secure and welcoming environment. Welfare procedures are in place and meet current requirements. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff work well as a team and there are good links with parents and carers, who are very supportive of their children's learning both in school and at home.

The speech and language centre is attended by up to 10 children from across the borough and the quality of care and teaching are good. Comprehensive planning for children's particular needs, lively and engaging teaching and very effective use of support staff ensures that children make good progress.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3



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## **Views of parents and carers**

Just over one sixth of parents and carers responded through the completed questionnaires. Of these, the vast majority were happy with the school's provision and indicated that their children enjoyed school and that pupils' behaviour was good. These parents and carers also agreed that the school helped their children to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspection findings confirm that this aspect is good. A very small number of parents and carers had concerns about their child's progress and whether their child's needs were met. Inspectors found some evidence to support these views, especially in lessons where pupils are not challenged as strongly as in others, but overall, pupils make satisfactory and improving progress.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Vernon Park Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 293 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	71	17	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	68	19	32	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	56	24	41	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	59	19	32	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	64	20	34	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	59	24	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	49	30	51	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	36	28	47	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	47	24	41	4	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	47	28	47	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	42	27	46	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	42	30	51	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	63	20	34	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and 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 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Vernon Park Primary School, Stockport, SK1 2NF**

On behalf of the inspection team I wish to thank you for your help and for talking with us when we visited your school. We listened carefully to what you had to say. We would particularly like to thank the pupils who met with us and the pupils who gave us such an interesting and informative tour of the school. You were all very polite and welcoming.

The school has helped you to develop a good understanding and respect for people from different backgrounds. You are also very health conscious and keen to keep fit through all your sporting activities. Well done on all the jobs you do in school as well as in your neighbourhood.

You mostly make satisfactory progress and do your best work in reading and writing. I would like you to improve your work in mathematics. I have asked your school to help you by involving you more in lessons and by making your work suitable and very clear to all of you. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are welcomed into school and make satisfactory progress. I have also asked your school to encourage children in the Nursery and Reception classes to play and explore more outdoors and for staff to plan routines so that children experience lots of different activities. Finally, I would like the school to further encourage your families to support you all in coming to school regularly. You can play a big part in this because I know you enjoy school life.

I wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marie Cordey

Lead inspector

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