

# Virginia Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100926
<b>Local Authority</b>	Tower Hamlets
<b>Inspection number</b>	354912
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martin Beale

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

---

<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>	188
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Wendy Birkby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Gooding
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	Virginia Road London E2 7NQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7739 6195
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7739 1685
<b>Email address</b>	head@virginia.towerhamlets.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 November 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	354912

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2010

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 17 lessons seeing eight teachers, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils, and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and improvement plans. Inspectors analysed 101 parental questionnaires, 77 responses to the pupils' survey and 14 responses to the staff questionnaire.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well teachers use assessment information to meet the needs of all pupils in their classes.
- Whether the action being taken to raise the attainment of boys in writing is meeting with success.
- How well teachers and pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) to support and enhance learning.

## Information about the school

Pupil numbers are rising in this below-average sized school. Most pupils are from Bangladeshi backgrounds and almost all are from homes where English is spoken as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average and more pupils than in most primary schools join or leave other than at the usual times. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Their needs are mostly associated with learning difficulties related to literacy and to speech and language. Children of Nursery and Reception ages in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a unit sharing staff, accommodation and resources. The school has received the Activemark and achieved Healthy School status.

**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?**

**2**

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

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school. It has developed some outstanding features under the strong leadership by the headteacher of an enthusiastic staff team who are united in the drive to raise achievement and promote equality of opportunity. The school's work is highly praised by parents, who particularly value the excellent partnership between home and school. This starts before children enter the Nursery and is developed well across the school. Through this partnership, the headteacher and her staff develop a very clear understanding of the circumstances of the pupils and their families. Based on this knowledge, resources are sharply targeted to provide excellent levels of care, guidance and support. This is particularly effective in supporting pupils' self-esteem and language development. The school also provides programmes of support for parents and directs them towards a wide range of services available in the local area.

Parents strongly agree with their children that the school cares about their welfare and does its utmost to keep them safe from harm. Pupils now have the skills to identify and deal with any potential risks they might face both inside and outside school. They are encouraged to resolve any problems themselves, and have great confidence that adults in school will help them deal with any concerns they subsequently take to them.

Pupils say that they greatly enjoy school. This view is endorsed by their parents and carers and is reflected in their children's enthusiasm and enjoyment for learning. Pupils take great pleasure in the wide range of extra activities to extend their experiences, from water polo in Year 3 to challenging mathematics lessons at a local secondary school for more able Year 6 pupils. These and many other activities are made possible by the extensive links with other organisations. These add expertise that would not otherwise be available to the school and include employees of a city insurance company who listen to Year 2 readers each week.

This enjoyment of school begins in the Nursery and Reception where the children make good progress in a happy and interesting environment. The adults work well as a team and help children settle quickly, and plan activities that meet their individual needs well. This good progress continues across the rest of the school, but is more rapid in the older year groups where teaching is at its most effective. Attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6 and a dip in test results in 2009 has been successfully addressed. While there are no significant differences in achievement in most areas, girls make more rapid progress in writing. However, handwriting and the quality of presentation are not given a high enough profile, marking does not make explicit how work can be improved and contexts for writing in both English and across subjects do not always engage boys or stimulate their imaginations.

Many lessons are taught well and lead to the pupils consolidating and learning new skills at a good pace. In these lessons, teaching motivates and engages the pupils by being

**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

pitched closely to meet their assessed needs. By contrast there are times when work is not sufficiently challenging and some direct teaching is unclear because tasks are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of all groups and abilities. This slows the pace of learning. Nevertheless, there is a shared commitment among staff to improve their performance as shown by the manner in which they have embraced the use of new technology to enhance learning.

Senior leaders analyse assessment data carefully and rigorously check the performance of staff, as a firm basis for self-evaluation and identifying priorities for improvement. There has been considerable improvement through the concerted action to tackle identified shortcomings. This means the school is now dismantling the barriers to learning with skill and determination and pupils are achieving well. This gives the school good capacity for further improvement.

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

- Bring greater consistency to the quality of teaching by using assessment information more effectively to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils.
- Raise achievement in writing, particularly for boys, by:
  - developing and implementing a policy that improves presentation and handwriting
  - providing more interesting and engaging contexts to stimulate writing
  - ensuring that marking consistently makes clear to pupils how they can improve their work so they can reach their writing targets.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

Pupils rapidly develop their skills and understanding from levels well below those expected for their age on entry and often with limited English. They learn new skills and consolidate their understanding at a good pace because they are keen to learn. They collaborate well and most become able to take responsibility for their learning by planning aspects of their own work. These features were seen in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, when pupils were very attentive and readily shared their ideas with a partner. As seen in many other classes, they worked with great concentration and enthusiasm on the tasks set. Pupils use their computer skills well to support their learning such as when Year 6 pupils used a spreadsheet to organise, sort and analyse data in mathematics.

By carefully targeting support and providing an environment rich in talk and language, pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English make similar progress as others in their classes.

The pupils' behaviour in lessons contributes significantly to their learning. They respond quickly to their teachers and need few reminders of what is expected of them. Pupils show great consideration for each other and respect for adults. They are very well versed in anti-bullying strategies and are keen to look after each other. Consequently, pupils of all backgrounds interact well, helping to generate a harmonious atmosphere throughout the school.

**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

Pupils are interested in learning about the world and the different customs and values of their friends. They know how to keep themselves healthy as shown by the high uptake of school meals and their keen participation in sports activities. This is reflected in the school's Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. They also enjoy participating in artistic and cultural activities, and have created a wonderful mural of the world showing the origins of many of the families attending the school. Pupils have a voice in developments through their school council and contribute significantly to the local area when working with 'The Friends of Arnold Circus'.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</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>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<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?

The most effective teaching is lively and grabs and retains the pupils' attention, as seen in a Year 4 lesson where pupils shared with each other the information they had discovered about Christopher Columbus. A consistent emphasis was placed on developing language skills through discussion, pertinent questions and the expectation of detailed responses. New technology was used well by teachers and pupils as a tool to extend and add interest to learning. The skilled team of other adults are deployed well in classrooms to support specific pupils and move their learning forward. Thorough marking identifies what pupils have done well, but does not always show how to improve a piece of work or the steps needed to meet longer-term targets particularly for their writing.

**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

The curriculum is imaginatively planned and contributes strongly to the pupils' good learning and enjoyment. Linking learning between subjects and promoting key skills across subjects are increasingly evident through topics such as 'Journeys' which includes learning about immigration, exploration and aspects of literacy. A variety of programmes help pupils who are falling behind their targets to catch up but activities to extend gifted and talented pupils are at an earlier stage of development. Learning is brought to life through a wide variety of additional activities, and through partnerships such as those with a local secondary school to teach aspects of physical education which contribute much to the pupils' healthy lifestyles.

The school takes excellent care of pupils. Adults place pupils' well-being at the centre of their work and this makes the school a happy place to be. Arrangements to settle children into school at whatever time they enter and the transfer between classes and on to secondary school are highly effective. They include excellent additional support for those pupils who find the transition stressful. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very carefully tracked, and they and their parents are increasingly involved in establishing future targets. The school works extremely well with parents, volunteers and a variety of external agencies to support those children most at risk.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The strong impact of leadership is seen in how effectively the headteacher and her senior management team are embedding ambition and driving improvement. They are ambitious for the pupils as shown through the challenging targets that are set. The analysis of assessment data means that leaders are able to identify underachievement and take action such as in starting to try to close the gender gap in writing. By checking carefully on the school's performance, senior leaders have a clear picture of the quality of teaching and where improvements are needed. Other leaders play an increasingly effective role in supporting the development of their colleagues and teachers are developing their skills through observing each other teach.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of school developments, and are clear about its strengths and where action is needed. However, they do not take sufficient overview of the school's direction through its policies and their implementation. The governing body ensures that everyone is kept safe by carefully vetting all those who work in the school. Strong teamwork ensures that policies and procedures to safeguard the welfare of all pupils are rigorously enacted and training regularly undertaken.

**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

Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is central to the work of the school and is of good quality. For example, the gap between the performance of boys and girls is narrowing although there is still more to do in writing. The success of the drive to make this a cohesive school community and to ensure that discrimination of any sort is not tolerated is reflected in the way pupils of all backgrounds mix happily together. The contribution the school makes to community cohesion is also good. A clear plan is in place for promoting pupils' understanding from local, national and global perspectives. Many local partnerships have been established to support the pupils' welfare and widen their experiences. The school reaches out to the local community and is developing closer links with other schools nationally and abroad. The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers is outstanding. Parents and carers are encouraged to become involved in their children's learning in very many ways including 'Family Learning Days'. They have a voice in the running of the school and have already successfully increased the number of workshops and clubs.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with skills very much lower than those expected for their age and a significant minority speak little or no English. Skilled direct teaching and pertinent interventions from adults move their learning and language forward rapidly while at the same time encouraging them to greater independence. They behave well and collaborate very effectively, initiating activities themselves and sharing ideas with each other. The environment is an interesting one for young children who are attracted by the activities and engage with them for long periods. Children are happy and become quickly engrossed in their work at the start of each session. As a result, children make good progress and achieve across both classes although their attainment is still below average by the time they enter Year 1.



**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

The very close and fruitful partnership with home starts from before children begin in the Nursery with weekly activities such as the very popular 'toy library'. The children's smooth start is built on in part by parents being invited into class for 30 minutes at the start of each day but also by involving themselves in whatever their children are learning. This fosters a strong sense of pride for both parents and their children. The children's development is enhanced as the two classes operate closely as a unit sharing accommodation, staff and resources. This and the sharp focus on the children's welfare help them to feel very safe and to develop trusting relationships with adults.

Very close staff teamwork enables priorities for action to be quickly identified and practice developed including providing additional training where needed. Improving boys' writing has become a priority with activities based around the 'Jolly Postman' books starting to stimulate their imaginations. Weaknesses in the children's calculating skills are being tackled by providing additional staff training to develop their expertise further.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

The number of responses to the questionnaire was higher than most primary schools. The level of parental satisfaction is above average in response to all questions. The inspection evidence supports the positive views of parents and carers about how their children are helped to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle. The inspection evidence shows that teaching and the pupils' progress are also good as parents suggest. Inspection evidence does not support the views of a small number of parents who believe that the particular needs of their children are not met or that the school does not take account of their concerns and suggestions. Inspectors investigated these concerns through an examination of documents, discussion with staff and pupils and by taking account of the majority of parents' views.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Virginia 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 101 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 188 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	53	46	46	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	53	42	42	5	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	49	49	47	47	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	43	55	54	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	51	47	47	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	50	47	47	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	40	61	60	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)	40	40	48	48	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	41	46	46	6	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	47	47	47	4	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	40	47	47	6	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	39	43	43	6	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	53	47	47	0	0	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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.**



26 November 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Virginia Primary School, London E2 7NQ**

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently, for making us feel welcome and for being so ready to share your thoughts with us. We had a chance to talk to quite a lot of you and we have told your teachers that you were very helpful and polite. We agree with you that Virginia Primary is a good and improving school. We also agree with you that your teachers take very good care of you and try hard to keep you safe. Your behaviour is good and you have an excellent understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and healthy. We were impressed by the way you work hard and try to do your best at all times. Well done for maintaining your above average levels of attendance.

You make good progress during your time in school, learning the skills you need for the future. Many, but not all, lessons are taught well and you benefit much from the sporting activities provided. Those of you who find learning more difficult or are new to learning English also make good progress because of the care and support you receive.

Everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. We have asked the teachers and other adults to:

- improve the quality of your written work particularly for boys
- plan activities that more closely meet your needs and move your learning forward even more rapidly
- give you a clearer idea of what you need to do to improve your work when they mark your books.

You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by working hard and continuing to show pride in your school.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**