

Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124120
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359586
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Arthur Forester
Headteacher	Joanne Banks
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2008
School address	School Drive Oakamoor, Stoke-on-Trent ST10 3DQ
Telephone number	01538 702355
Fax number	01538 702355
Email address	headteacher@valley.staffs.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Inspection number	359586

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 123 4234, or email 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 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed three teaching staff while visiting 10 lessons. Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, senior leaders, teaching staff and groups of pupils. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, assessment and tracking information, the governing body minutes, arrangements for safeguarding, and pupils' work. Pupil and staff questionnaires were also scrutinised, along with 36 completed by parents and carers.

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

- Are there any differences in progress between boys and girls?
- Do those pupils who entered the school other than at the usual starting time make the same progress as other pupils?
- To what extent are the pupils aware of people from other cultures and social backgrounds?

Information about the school

Valley is a much smaller than average sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have mild learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils entering the school at times other than the usual starting times is much higher than seen nationally. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught separately in the Reception class in the mornings and alongside pupils from Years 1 and 2 in the afternoons.

The school has gained National Healthy School status and has the Activemark and International Schools Intermediate awards. It has also gained Dyslexia Friendly 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

Valley Primary is a good school. It provides a good education for its pupils. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and are rightly pleased with the outstanding care, guidance and support provided. The views of one are typical of many when commenting, 'I am very pleased with the way my child is being supported at school. He has recently had a few nerves and worries about school but these were dealt with very sensitively and in a caring way. All the staff made my son feel more relaxed and confident about school'. The school has improved the quality of care, guidance and support for its pupils, particularly for the increasing number of pupils who enter the school after the normal starting times and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, these pupils make good progress. Pupils achieve well throughout the school so that their attainment is above average by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' outstanding behaviour contributes considerably to their progress. There is no significant difference in achievement between boys and girls. Occasionally, more-able pupils do not progress as rapidly as they should in lessons because they do not begin more challenging activities soon enough.

Children are provided with a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good support and teaching ensure they make consistently good progress and are well prepared for the next stage of learning. Teaching and learning are good throughout the rest of the school. Intervention strategies are particularly effective in helping those pupils who find learning difficult. Staff know these pupils exceptionally well and provide them with tailored programmes to accelerate their learning. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and systematically. Their written comments do not always highlight the next steps for learning sufficiently clearly.

Pupils are rightly pleased with the wide range of enrichment activities that enhance the good curriculum. The many sporting and physical activities support the pupils' outstanding healthy lifestyles. Opportunities for pupils to grow, tend and sell their own fruit and vegetables and to look after the poultry provide them with a good understanding of the benefits of fresh produce in their diets. Good partnerships make a good contribution to the curriculum, for example, links with a feeder high school enable the school to provide German and French tuition for pupils.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and teachers provide good support in the drive for further improvement. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. As a result of improvements to tracking and assessment procedures, the school has a clear picture of how well pupils are progressing and implements early interventions to ensure there is no underachievement. The governing body provides good support and challenge to the school's leadership. Plans for community cohesion are good. Established links with a school in Kenya contribute to the pupils' understanding of the different backgrounds of

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

people. The school has rightly identified the need to provide pupils with a greater awareness of people from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in this country. The improvement to pupils' progress, its curriculum and its rigorous self-evaluation demonstrate it is well prepared to sustain improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress in lessons of the more-able pupils by allowing them to move on to more challenging activities sooner and by providing them with clearer information in their work as to the next steps for improvement.
- Thoroughly evaluate the school's community cohesion plan and use the information to broaden pupils' awareness and understanding of people from other cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are similar to those expected for their age. The small number of pupils entering the school each year means that there are considerable variations year-on-year. Lesson observations demonstrate children make good progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that they are well prepared to step up to Year 1 work. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is above average in English, mathematics and science and they make good progress throughout the school. Pupils' writing skills develop particularly well. For example, older pupils in Key Stage 2 demonstrated good letter writing skills when responding to letters from pupils in the linked school in Kenya. Occasionally, the progress of the more-able pupils is not as quick as it should be as they are required to listen to the teachers' explaining activities for other groups instead of being able to get on with their activities sooner. They are also sometimes required to do work that is insufficiently challenging before moving on to work that matches their needs. Pupils' speaking skills improve rapidly throughout the school; the result of effective questioning by the teachers that encourages the pupils to respond at length. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well. Skilled learning support assistants provide daily, intensive support for small groups of pupils, enabling them to progress well and take a full part in all aspects of the curriculum.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe, thoroughly enjoy learning and talk enthusiastically about the visits and visitors that make learning more exciting. For example, they talk eagerly of the visit by a local children's author and how he has not only inspired their story writing but also helped them with the making of models from the main character in his stories. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility as part of the school council and as ECO warriors. 'Playground buddies' and 'play leaders' help in the smooth running of breaktimes and in encouraging their peers to participate in physical activities. Older pupils help the younger pupils through paired reading sessions. Pupils take leading roles in village life, regularly singing for church and local events. They are very enthusiastic in their support for local and national charities and look forward to be able to help their partner school in Kenya. Pupils have a good awareness of other religions and cultures but their knowledge of people from other backgrounds in the United Kingdom is less secure. Pupils' above average basic skills and attendance and their good social skills prepare them well for the next stage of their learning.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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?

Teachers plan work well to match the needs of different abilities and ages in their classes. For example, in an excellent lesson with pupils from Years 3 to 6, careful planning ensured that pupils of all abilities were productively engaged in writing letters, producing attractive artwork in the style of African landscape artists and improving their mathematical skills through comparing the currencies of the United Kingdom and Kenya. The pace in this lesson was good and it engaged the pupils' interest because of the practical activities. Teachers use assessment information to plan lessons well and there are clear learning objectives. Learning support assistants play a valuable role in helping those pupils who find learning difficult to make good progress. Occasionally, more-able pupils do not begin work that is sufficiently challenging for them soon enough in lessons. Teachers sometimes provide these pupils with too much information, limiting the opportunities for them to find things out for themselves.

Pupils say they enjoy learning because there are 'lots of interest things to do'. They talk enthusiastically about the work they undertook with students from the high school in producing a computer animation. They particularly enjoy the specialist music tuition and learning to play a musical instrument. Residential visits for pupils in Years 5 and 6 add significantly to their social skills.

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

Effective mentoring provides excellent guidance and support for those pupils who lack confidence or who are having learning, behavioural or emotional difficulties, enabling them to take a full part in all aspects of the curriculum and school life. There is detailed tracking and assessment of their needs, enabling the school to put in place an effective range of support. This support is very effective for those pupils who enter the school after the normal starting times, enabling them to settle quickly and, eventually, make progress in line with their peers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Action taken by the school has ensured that the curriculum is more enjoyable for pupils, and their learning has been accelerated as a result of better strategies for identifying their needs. Teaching and learning are monitored systematically and all staff are keen to develop their skills. All staff share a common commitment to equality of opportunity and are taking positive steps to provide the best possible education for all pupils. Staff are developing their skills in utilising assessment information to monitor the work of the school. They are improving their skills in evaluating and moderating pupils' learning. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and implemented fully. Governors hold the school to account and are developing their skills in challenging the leadership to improve the provision further.

There are excellent links with parents and carers who are kept well informed about their children's progress. The Parents' Forum provides parents and carers with an excellent opportunity to contribute to changes in the school's provision, for example the introduction of adults as 'reading partners'. Community cohesion is promoted well but the leadership rightly acknowledges the need to extend the pupils' awareness of the different backgrounds of people in this country. Effective partnerships with a range of partners contribute well to the quality of education. For example, links with a local business provide pupils with opportunities to develop their enterprise skills.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents and carers are rightly pleased with the start their children are given in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children settle quickly to work and rapidly gain in confidence. Work is planned effectively to meet the needs of individuals and the small number of children ensure they are provided with a high level of very effective support. Good attention is given to developing children's recognition of letter sounds and numeracy skills. Children make good progress because staff provide a good range of activities and make good use of assessment information when planning work. There is a good balance of teacher-directed and child-chosen activities. The outside space is well utilised with good opportunities to extend the free-flow of activities. The staff use a variety of learning strategies to stimulate the children's enthusiasm. For example, singing activities are used to good effect to stimulate children's learning. Children's speaking and listening skills develop well through use of the role-play area, currently a kitchen area. There are good opportunities for children to work with older children during the afternoon sessions when they learn new skills. For example, the children made their own flower collage as their older classmates produced very attractive pastel drawings of sunflowers. The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator provides good leadership and manages the provision well.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

A higher proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires than is seen nationally. Most parents and carers were very satisfied with the quality of education received by their children. A few expressed concerns regarding the progress made by their children and how the school met the needs of their children. The inspector found that the progress of pupils was good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Valley 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 inspector received 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 49 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	78	5	14	3	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	83	6	17	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	69	8	22	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	61	10	28	3	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	72	7	19	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	75	8	22	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	81	7	19	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)	22	61	12	33	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	67	8	22	3	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	58	14	39	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	58	12	33	1	3	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	23	64	11	31	2	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	78	5	14	2	6	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).

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



11 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Valley Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST10 3DQ

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you work and play. I also enjoyed listening to your singing in assembly. You are very polite, your behaviour is outstanding and you work well with one another. You are keen to take responsibility and do much to support your school and the local community.

You go to a good school that provides you with a good education so that your attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Children in the Reception class are provided with a good start and make good progress. The teachers work hard to ensure that all of you make good progress. The staff give considerable help to those of you who find learning a little difficult. Occasionally, I think some of you who find work a little easy could do even better and we have asked the school to help you to do so. I have asked the teachers to tell you how you can improve your work when they mark it. There are many interesting things for you to do and you have lots of visits and visitors that make your work more interesting. You have a really good understanding of the need to eat healthily and you are keen to take part in the sporting activities on offer. The staff look after you exceptionally well and you know how to keep safe. I have asked the school to help you understand the different backgrounds of people who live in the United Kingdom.

Those in charge of the school are working hard to make it better. You can help by telling your teachers if you find the work too easy.

Yours sincerely

Paul Edwards

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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.