

The Village School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101583
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	355028
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Bob Pugh

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Patricia Turner
Headteacher	Ms Kay Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 22 lessons and held meetings with staff, pupils and governors. Inspectors looked at pupils' work files, their records of achievement and at photographic and other evidence. The school improvement plan was scrutinised, as were minutes of governors' meetings and reports from the local authority and School Improvement Partner. The views of the 43 parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the school were noted by inspectors, and 68 pupils and 77 members of staff also made their views known through their questionnaires.

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

- Pupils' progress, including for those with the most complex needs.
- The impact of actions by school leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning and enhance outcomes for all pupils and raise achievement.
- How the curriculum and additional activities meet the individual needs of all learners and contribute to the development of workplace and other skills.
- The impact of the school's provision on pupils' personal development and its safeguarding procedures.

Information about the school

The Village School opened in 2010, the result of the merger of two Brent special schools, Hay Lane and Grove Park. It is a larger than average special school and all pupils have statements of special educational needs. These needs include autistic spectrum disorder, profound and multiple learning difficulties and communication difficulties. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make up approximately 90% of the school community; the Black African, Pakistani and Indian communities are highly represented. A larger than average proportion of pupils are entitled to free schools meals. The school operates on one campus divided into three educational villages, one of which serves as the Sixth Form Centre.

Plans are being discussed for a new school building. Satellite classes are being planned for at a neighbouring mainstream 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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The Village School is a welcoming community which provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. School leaders and managers work diligently to ensure that all members of the school community feel safe, valued and respected. They are ambitious for their pupils and have guided the school well through a difficult transition period. They are clearly committed to improving pupils' achievements and have developed good self-evaluation systems which provide information about how the school should move forward.

Parents are generally pleased with the work of the newly merged school; one commented: 'My son is benefiting greatly from a teacher who takes time to understand his needs.' The Family Support Workers make a particularly strong contribution to ensuring that communication between home and school is productive.

Pupils like attending school and feel well supported by the staff. They behave well in lessons and in the playground and most say that they enjoy their lessons especially those which take them into the local or wider community on trips and visits. Those pupils who know what their learning targets are feel a sense of achievement when they reach them. However, not all pupils understand what they need to improve through effective target setting or marking. This is because assessment information, in relation to the progress pupils' make in their work, is not yet precise enough to help staff set more accurate individual learning targets.

As a result of effective care, guidance and support from staff and from the school's partner organisations, such as Connexions, students are often ambitious, sometimes deciding to take examinations a second time to secure better grades. Where teachers have high expectations and ensure that planning is well matched to needs, pupils learn well and develop skills which will be of great use to them in later life. In the sixth form, effective teaching and support enables all students to make good progress and they are keen to succeed. In other parts of the school, while there is some good teaching, the quality is not yet consistent. This is because there is not always enough challenge and the pace of lessons slows. Alternative communication techniques such as signing and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) are underused in some classes, including in the Early Years' Foundation Stage. This impedes pupils' understanding of what they are being asked to do.

The school works well with its many partners, including other schools in the area, to ensure that good systems of support are in place for its pupils and their families. There is a growing programme of visits amongst schools so that pupils get more opportunities to learn alongside others of the same age.

A good start has been made to develop a sense of school identity. There is a shared ambition and clear commitment from senior leaders and management and other staff to

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do well for their pupils. School leaders ensure that all members of their school community are involved in planning for the future and the views of pupils, parents and staff have been taken into account. Overall, therefore, the school has a satisfactory capacity for further sustained improvement. One of the most pressing issues is a school site and building that presents significant difficulties in inclement weather, including a barely adequate heating system.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of spring term 2012, ensure that assessment systems, including marking, provide better information about pupils' progress, so that more accurate individual learning targets can be set and pupils understand what they need to do to improve.
- By the end of spring term 2012, raise the standard of teaching and learning throughout the school so that it is consistently good or better.
- Introduce better alternative communication techniques, including ICT, in all areas of the school so that pupils gain a clearer understanding of what they are being asked to do.
- Work with the local authority to make sure that all areas of the school building are fit for purpose, including adequate heating, so that learning is not interrupted by poor weather.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Achievement is satisfactory and overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning, in relation to their starting points and complex learning needs. Older students in the sixth form make good progress and are successful at obtaining good GCSE grades. Throughout the school, pupils work well together and particularly enjoy practical learning tasks that are meaningful and relevant. In one good ICT lesson, for example, pupils were keen to help each other create spreadsheets based on weekly sales and successfully completed the task. Pupils and their parents and carers are generally positive about the difference that The Village School makes to their learning. Students and pupils are pleased with their achievements, especially when these are celebrated in a letter or telephone call home from the teacher.

Pupils feel safe. They say that they know what they have to do if they feel frightened or worried and they know who can help them on and off the school site. Their behaviour is good and they show good levels of respect for each other and for staff.

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, they know about the need to take exercise. They particularly enjoy swimming and participate in a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs. Pupils play a constructive role in the school and wider community and they have representation on the Brent Youth Parliament. They raise money for national charities such as a riding centre for children who have disabilities. Older students attend person-centred reviews and are involved in decision-making about their targets and transition programmes. Consequently, pupils make good progress in preparation for the future and for their economic well being.

Pupils' spiritual awareness is good. There are many opportunities for quiet reflection and celebration. Inspectors observed class discussions and assemblies about Mothers' Day

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which helped pupils to talk about their families and the people they care about. They visit theatres, cultural and arts centres and enjoy art, drama and music lessons.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Teaching varies across the school and is satisfactory overall. It is most effective where teachers set learning objectives for each pupil and where they are well supported by teaching assistants and by each other. Where word signing is used by staff, pupils respond enthusiastically, showing that they understand what is being communicated and are able to respond with appropriate signs. Personalised timetables are successfully employed with pupils who have an autistic spectrum condition, to help them to understand the sequence and pace of the lesson and to assist with concentration. There is a lack of consistency in how these strategies are deployed across the school, which results in less effective teaching and learning in some classes. In some classes, pupils' work is not checked or marked often enough, and they are not offered enough advice about how to do better.

Teachers and school leaders have worked well together to produce an effective curriculum. Classrooms are generally stimulating areas in which to learn as a result of imaginative displays of pupils' work. There are many opportunities for learning out of

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school, including sports and arts activities as well as improving life skills in the local community. These activities successfully support good personal development. Good opportunities are taken up in many lessons, to reinforce pupils' numeracy, literacy and communication skills. Links with other schools have developed well, leading to a number of shared learning events in the arts and sport. The school's medical and therapy staff make an important contribution to ensuring all pupils are able to access all that the school has to offer. They provide high quality support for those who require their specialist care and guidance during the day.

Pupils and students are well cared for and supported at the school, and they are offered high quality guidance by most staff. There are strong procedures in place for welcoming them and making them feel comfortable when they arrive at school in the morning and for supporting those who need help with self-care or mobility.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior staff provide good leadership. They have worked hard to bring the two schools together. As a result, they have successfully developed an effective shared ambition and everyone has a clear view of what they want to achieve for their pupils. They have confidently discarded systems which are of little value and are making well informed choices to move the school forwards. They use their own knowledge of the school to set realistic targets and have used external consultants to help them bring a sharp focus to their planning. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is improving. However they acknowledge that this is not yet consistent across the school.

Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities and support the school well. At this stage, they rely heavily on reports they receive from senior staff to inform their work and hold the school to account, but they have a strong commitment to improvement and to developing their own roles. Resources are used appropriately to provide satisfactory value for money.

Partnerships with other schools and with other agencies in the community are good and have a positive effects on children's learning and well being, and promote a positive image of The Village School in its local area. The school has been proactive in seeking the views of parents and carers and has used their responses to enhance relationships. The Family Support Workers have worked hard with parents to help them engage as fully as possible in the life of the school.

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Procedures for safeguarding children are effective and all checks have been carried out on adults who work or have links with the school. The single central record is efficiently maintained and updated. The school has identified what it needs to do to promote learning about its own and other communities and works hard and effectively to promote cohesion within the school and beyond.

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	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is some outstanding teaching in this part of the school and, in these lessons, children fully engage with and are enthusiastic about learning. Work is well planned and targets are made personal to each child. In less successful lessons, learning targets are vague, signing and other communication tools are underused and opportunities for extending learning using ICT are missed. Assessment of children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is inconsistent, which means that information passed to teachers when children move to the next class is partial and of limited value.

The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator and the Village Leader have successfully identified those areas which require development and have put in place relevant plans to improve progress. These include using visits to home by staff and visits to school by parents as a means of providing good information about children's individual needs and sharing ideas about how school and home can work together to help them make better progress.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
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

Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Through their good practice, members of the sixth form department prepare their students for an active and involved adult life. Students make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their starting points. They show a strong sense of the needs of others and offer support and friendship to young people who join the school from other areas or from other countries. Planning is highly personalised according to individual needs, with good tracking and checking systems in place. The curriculum meets the students' diverse range of needs and abilities very well. All aspects are carefully planned and varied, and many learning experiences are in place which move the students towards being independent adults. A good example of this was observed when students were learning to identify coins in the classroom prior to a shopping trip.

The quality and variety of the activities and leisure pursuits promote the students' independence skills and self-confidence. There are good links with the local community which include work experience and contacts with further education colleges. Staff work well with families to ensure high rates of student attendance.

There is strong and positive leadership in the sixth form which helps to ensure that students make a positive contribution to their own learning and well-being and to the wider community. Staff know all the students well and are clear about their individual needs and the steps to take to enhance personal growth. Nothing is ever too much trouble and the way that resources are used effectively means that the students make consistently good progress. This shows the staff's high level of commitment and the sixth form's good capacity to improve.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

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Views of parents and carers

All the registered parents and carers of pupils and students were invited to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. A below average number returned the questionnaire. On the whole, their responses were positive and supportive. In particular, they said that their children enjoy school and that they were safe whilst at school. Most said that teaching is good, though a few felt that the school should do more to help them support their child at home. Inspection evidence supports their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Village 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 208 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	56	17	40	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	56	16	37	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	21	49	18	42	3	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	40	18	42	4	9	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	20	47	19	44	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	40	18	42	5	12	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	47	18	42	3	7	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)	14	33	15	35	3	7	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	28	22	51	4	9	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	30	23	53	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	33	22	51	3	7	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	14	33	21	49	4	9	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	44	20	47	1	2	1	2

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.



1 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Village School, London NW9 0JY

Thank you for the welcome you gave my colleagues and me when we visited your school recently. You behaved well and were very polite and helpful to us. A special thank you to those of you who met us to shared your ideas about the school. We found that your school is satisfactory overall, which means it does some things well but there are areas that can be improved.

We think that your school cares for you well and gives you good guidance and support. Your behaviour is good and you told us that you enjoy school. This helps you to learn in lessons. Your families agree that your school provides you with interesting lessons and activities.

To make the school even better and to improve your progress, we have asked your school to do the following:

- Ensure all teaching at the school is of the very highest quality.
- Ensure teachers assess and mark your work carefully to help you understand how you can improve your learning.
- Make better use of alternative communication methods and information and communication technology throughout the school so you understand what you have been asked to do.
- Improve your school buildings and site so that your learning can carry on without unnecessary interruptions.

Yours sincerely

Bob Pugh

Lead inspector

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