

Valewood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104890
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	395628
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2012
Lead inspector	Jane Millward HMI

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	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charlotte Royle
Headteacher	Helen Kokkinos
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jane Millward
Philip Choi

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Sixteen lessons were observed taught by nine teachers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and members of staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school development plan, pupils' work, progress data, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance data and safeguarding records. They analysed 97 inspection questionnaires completed by parents and carers and those submitted by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Valewood Primary School is smaller than the average-sized school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average at School Action level; but above average at School Action Plus and for those with a statement of special educational needs. The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage. Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and there have been considerable staffing changes. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The school holds the UNICEF Rights Respecting School Recognition of Commitment Award and has International 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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Valewood is a satisfactory school. It is a highly-inclusive, welcoming school where pupils feel safe. The school has strengths in relationships between staff and pupils and the care it provides for pupils, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. It is not a good school because pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are in need of further improvement. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress. They enter school with skill levels broadly in line with those expected for their age. They leave the school having attained broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Some pupils make good progress and achieve well. However, others do not achieve enough, due to teachers' expectations of progress not being high enough.
- The quality of teaching although satisfactory overall varies between classes. Some teachers set work to challenge pupils effectively and positive relationships prevail. They use assessment information well to match planned activities to pupils' needs and some marking provides guidance on how pupils can improve. However, these aspects are not applied across all classes and subjects consistently. In some lessons, opportunities are missed to challenge pupils.
- Pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and their behaviour in school is good. They are polite and courteous. Most pupils say instances of bullying are rare. The school is particularly effective at meeting the needs of pupils who display challenging behaviour. Attendance is average and leaders monitor rates of absences well. Rates of pupil absence are declining.
- Senior leaders use performance management procedures to set appropriate targets for staff to secure further improvement. Senior leaders monitor and evaluate classroom practice and instigate appropriate training to improve the quality of teaching. Pupils' progress is checked regularly. However, leaders

recognise that some refinement is needed to the evaluation of the school's work to secure further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - matching work more consistently to the needs of all pupils through the use of assessment information
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that marking in all subjects guides pupils to their next steps in learning.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that the curriculum builds on pupils' progression of basic skills
 - ensuring that guided reading is consistently planned for and supports pupils' progress in reading
 - ensuring better opportunities for learning using the outdoor environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - ensuring that monitoring is more rigorous and leads to actions to bring about improvements in pupils' outcomes
 - ensuring that governors always hold the school rigorously to account.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enjoy school, have good attitudes to learning and co-operate well with each other. Most pupils feel they learn a lot in lessons and almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said their child made good progress at this school. As one parent stated, 'our daughter enjoys school and her love of learning is being supported and encouraged.' Inspectors, however, found progress to be satisfactory overall for the reasons outlined below.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage children were observed working well together to investigate how to double and halve numbers. In a Year 5 lesson clear success criteria contributed to the pupils' understanding of what they needed to achieve when working in groups to create dialogue. Children start school with skills broadly in line with those expected for their age group. They make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enjoy a variety of activities. These encourage co-operation and independence. As one reception parent stated, 'my son is really happy at school and has already learnt to read, write and do maths.'

Pupils' books, lesson observations and the school's own assessment information show that across the school, pupils are making securely satisfactory progress although progress in mathematics is better than in reading and writing. There are no significant differences in attainment or progress between different groups of pupils. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress commensurate to that of their peers due to targeted support and a raft of interventions. The tracking procedures introduced by the headteacher support staff in knowing when pupils are beginning to fall behind and so are better placed to help them catch up. Useful pupil progress meetings ensure greater accountability by teachers for the progress of their pupils in their class.

Most pupils say they enjoy reading and a systematic programme to teach phonics (the sounds that letters make) is in place. Pupils show an awareness of how to decode words and regular assessments are made on what pupils have achieved. However, insufficient structure is provided for the teaching of reading higher up the school and guided reading in some instances is not planned for. Pupils say they sometimes have stories read to them. This irregularity results in younger pupils having a limited knowledge of authors. Attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is in line with national expectations.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but is variable across the school. Features of the more effective teaching include: positive relationships where pupils feel safe to take risks in their learning; clear expectations of what needs to be achieved by the end of the lesson; assessments of prior learning to support what pupils need to do next; effective use of additional adults to provide appropriate support to access learning and; activities that are enjoyable and interest pupils. Many of these features were seen in a Year 5 lesson where pupils identified key information in word problems. The use of the interactive whiteboard clarified learning and pupils were encouraged to self-assess their own learning. However, these sorts of features are not found consistently. In some lessons, teachers do not always have high enough expectations which results in activities being set which do not always match what pupils are capable of achieving. Furthermore, too little use of the outdoor environment is made in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and, where it is used, learning opportunities are missed. This is because pupils have a lack of choice of purposeful activities outside.

Relationships in lessons are very good, both between pupils and between pupils and adults. This contributes strongly to pupils' developing confidence and further supports their satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Learning develops pupils' ability to show consideration, engage in reflection and to appreciate others' points of view. Pupils with a disability or special educational needs enjoy lessons which are often taught by teaching assistants during group activities or in the 'STAR base.' (Specialist Teaching Area.) Most pupils agree that teaching is good at school and they appreciate the curriculum enrichment activities that the school offers to enhance the quality of teaching. The large majority of parents and carers also feel their child is taught well.

Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the school. Some effectively guides pupils in how to improve their work, especially in literacy. However, often marking simply affirms the efforts of pupils. In some instances the presentation of pupils' work is not good enough and the teachers do not hold high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Some pupils' work remains unmarked.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All pupils spoken to reported feeling safe and very happy at school. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire also feel that their children are happy and safe and that behaviour is good. A few commented on improvements made since the appointment of the headteacher. As one parent stated,

'we would just like to acknowledge the positive changes the headteacher and her team have made across the school since her arrival. Although change takes time to consolidate, it is obvious to most parents that there has been a change to curriculum, teaching and learning since her arrival with emphasis on targets, progress and linked learning.'

This positive change has resulted in pupils' good attitudes to learning and each other. They are polite, courteous and interested in the views of others. They get on well with each other and enjoy school life. When a pupil displays challenging behaviour it is managed well by all staff. Incidents of bullying are rare, and the school monitors pupils' behaviour through useful behaviour logs. This practice provides evidence to ensure that the school deals with incidents of bullying well. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying and they know who to turn to if an incident arises.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet. They are well looked after and the before-school and the after-school club provide appropriate care and supervision for pupils using the facilities. Attendance in 2011 was average. However, recent improvements are clearly evident and effective strategies put into place are paying dividends. Improvements can also be seen in the number of pupils who are now arriving at school punctually.

Leadership and management

Since her appointment three years ago, the headteacher has identified procedures and systems which needed to be implemented for school improvement to have an impact across the school and raise achievement for all pupils. She has the full confidence and support of the governing body and parents and carers and staff morale is high. The leadership structure is beginning to impact across the school and the clear vision for the future is communicated well across the school community. This provides the school with satisfactory capacity to improve further. There is a rigorous monitoring cycle in place providing a focus on the leadership and improvement of teaching. Teachers are held to account for the progress being made by pupils and professional development opportunities have been used to improve teaching.

Members of the governing body are highly committed to the school. They are beginning to hold the school better to account due to the increased analysis of information shared by the senior leaders. Links between governors and teaching staff are developing and members of the governing body are keen to develop aspects of accountability, including a greater involvement in monitoring the work in school by leaders at all levels. Middle leaders have a consistent approach to leading their subject areas. They monitor provision and outcomes in their subjects and hold staff meetings to inform staff of developments. Aspects of their work are not embedded across the school and subject leaders are not involved enough in all areas of school improvement.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and leaders promote equality and tackle discrimination. Leaders ensure that there is good provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Good links with external agencies are used well to overcome any barriers pupils face in their learning or their behaviour.

The school's curriculum contributes to pupils' satisfactory achievement and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and a wide range of enrichment activities is very well-received, for example, judo, ballet and gardening. The curriculum is broad and balanced. However, not all work systematically builds on pupils' knowledge and understanding and hence does not sufficiently develop their progression of basic skills as well as it might. The school has promoted links with parents and carers by delivering workshops to help them support their children's learning. Regular newsletters enable them to know what is going on in school, and almost all parents and carers think the school keeps them well-informed.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Valewood Primary School, Liverpool, L23 7YG

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. As you know we came to see how well you were doing and what you said helped us with our findings.

Valewood is a satisfactory school and we could tell that you are proud of your school. From conversations with you it is clear that most of you feel safe in school and you know who to turn to if you have a problem. We agree that your teachers take good care of you. Your achievement is satisfactory and you enjoy learning. The headteacher, teachers and governing body are committed to doing their best to make sure that the school keeps getting better.

It is our job to find out how schools can do even better. We have asked your headteacher, teachers and the governing body to work on three things in particular:

- to raise attainment and improve your progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- improve the quality of teaching and learning
- improve the quality of leadership and management.

We know that you will want to help in every way you can, so please continue to try hard in lessons. We wish you every success in your education.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

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