

Vale View Community School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118494
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379628
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2012
Lead inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Valerie Clough
Headteacher	Abigail Birch
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2009
School address	Vale View Road Elmsvale Dover CT17 9NP
Telephone number	01304 202821
Fax number	01304 202821
Email address	headteacher@vale-view.kent.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick

Additional inspector

Anthony Hayes

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors spent nine hours observing teaching. This included visiting 17 lessons and observing eight teachers. They heard groups of pupils reading in Years 1, 2 and 6, and held meetings with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including policies, the school improvement plan, pupils' books and records of their learning and progress. In addition, inspectors considered the responses to questionnaires from 82 parents and carers, as well as others submitted by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

The school is broadly average in size for a primary school. Most pupils are White British. A small minority are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being of Gypsy Romany heritage from Eastern Europe. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those identified with special educational needs is much higher than in most schools. Most of these pupils have communication, literacy, numeracy and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school during the school year is higher than usual. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in Nursery and Reception classes.

An executive headteacher, who leads another school, was appointed in November 2011. The two schools came together as a federation at that time under one governing body. The head of school manages Vale View when the executive headteacher is at the federated school.

The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	4

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- This is not a satisfactory school because its leadership and management are not strong enough to raise pupils’ attainment or overcome a legacy of underachievement and weak teaching. After a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make inadequate progress in Key Stages 1 and 2, and their attainment at the end of Year 6 is low. Pupils do not apply phonics skills (knowledge of letters and their sounds) well enough to develop their reading and writing. In mathematics, pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding, and weak problem-solving skills.
- Teaching is inadequate in Years 1 to 6. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In Key Stage 1, there is insufficient direct teaching of reading and writing in literacy lessons. Despite some improvements recently to the teaching in Key Stage 2, too many lessons remain inadequate because they do not meet pupils’ differing needs. This is particularly evident in the weak literacy and numeracy skills of the many less-able pupils. The curriculum does not provide a secure footing for teaching these basic skills.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Most pupils behave well, enjoy school and feel safe. Behaviour around the school site is typically good. However, a few older boys occasionally disrupt lessons when work is not matched well enough to their needs.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The school’s leaders have not secured the improvements identified as necessary during the previous inspection, including raising pupils’ attainment and improving teaching. Until

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recently, teachers have been given insufficient help to improve their teaching. The new executive headteacher provides clear strategic direction, but the effectiveness of leadership overall remains fragile as most other managers and governors are new and not yet able to take a full part in challenging school performance and raising achievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics so that it is at least average by the end of Year 6 by:
 - ensuring that pupils consistently apply phonic skills when reading and writing
 - improving pupils' skills in spelling, sentence writing and punctuation
 - identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics
 - improving their mathematical problem-solving skills.

- Urgently eradicate all inadequate teaching and improve the overall quality of teaching to at least good by:
 - more frequent teaching of literacy skills in Key Stage 1, and ensuring time is used more productively in lessons
 - using assessment information effectively to ensure lesson activities are planned so that they always build on what pupils have already learned
 - ensuring that reading books are well matched to pupils' abilities and are meaningful for those learning English as an additional language
 - ensuring that the least able pupils have daily opportunities to read and to be heard reading.

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of the senior leaders and working in full partnership with the executive headteacher to lead and improve the school
 - developing the roles of middle leaders so they take a full part in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment and progress
 - developing the skills of the governing body so that the governors hold the school fully to account.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' progress through the school is uneven and their achievement is inadequate. Although the school has started to tackle the legacy of significant underachievement, all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, fail to make the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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The majority of children join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are well below age-related expectations. A minority of children are at the early stages of learning English or have particularly weak communication skills. Good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes closes the gaps and lifts children's attainment to broadly average on entry to Year 1. However, the school does not build on these good foundations and pupils make inadequate progress in Key Stage 1. Pupils' attainment is low in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. As a result, too many pupils have literacy and numeracy difficulties in Key Stage 2 and they are poorly prepared for their secondary education.

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 has been consistently low for some years in reading, writing and mathematics. Far too few pupils attain the National Curriculum levels expected for their age or the higher levels. In reading, the attainment of nearly half the current Year 6 pupils is below the level expected for their age, and they have weak phonics skills. In Key Stage 1, pupils' knowledge of phonics is starting to improve due to more regular phonics lessons. However, throughout the school, pupils do not apply their knowledge of phonics well enough to reading and writing. Reading books are often too hard for the significant number of pupils who have communication and literacy difficulties, and are not matched to their phonics knowledge. During the inspection some pupils learning English as an additional language could sound out words but did not understand their meaning because the reading books were too abstract. More-able and middle-ability pupils write for a range of purposes but their weak spelling, sentence construction and punctuation restrict their progress and attainment. In mathematics, the lack of a steady build-up of basic skills, and few opportunities for pupils to apply mathematics to real-life problems, result in their low attainment.

The quality of learning in lessons is variable and is inadequate overall. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because activities are enjoyable and successfully build on their prior skills. However, in Key Stages 1 and 2 progress is inadequate because the planning of pupils' learning activities is not carefully matched to ability. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, more-able pupils successfully read a class text but it was too hard for most of the other pupils. In a mathematics lesson on fractions in Year 6, more-able pupils learned satisfactorily but the work was too hard for the average-ability and less-able pupils. The more-able pupils were often seen to be making satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 but their work was often pitched at average levels because of the need to fill gaps in their learning due to earlier underachievement. Most parents and carers feel their children are making progress but the inspection team found that achievement is inadequate because of pupils' unsatisfactory past and current progress.

Quality of teaching

Inspection findings show that teaching quality is too inconsistent from one year to the next, and too much teaching is inadequate. Although parents and carers expressed overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching, pupils are not making enough progress because of inconsistent teacher expectations and variations in the

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pace and quality of learning in lessons.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, the teaching of discrete phonics sessions is satisfactory but teachers do not consistently encourage pupils to apply phonics at other times. In Key Stage 1, there is not enough direct teaching of reading during literacy lessons. In a literacy lesson in Year 1, for example, pupils spent a long time listening to less-able pupils performing a nursery rhyme rather than being engaged in reading or writing activities themselves. The pace of learning in literacy lessons is too variable because time is not used consistently well in Years 1 and 2. When pupils are given tasks such as cutting, sticking and colouring, the less-able pupils in particular, simply mark time.

In better lessons in Key Stage 2, teachers plan carefully for the ability range. In a good guided reading session in Year 5, for example, the teacher's questioning promoted higher-order thinking skills for the more-able pupils and well-matched work promoted good learning for the other groups. However, in other years the difficulties faced by less-able pupils in understanding the work set are reflected in their books, where much work is unfinished and has not built securely on their previous skills. Pupils are set clear targets for improvement but teachers' marking of pupils' work is patchy in quality and effectiveness. Reading records do not show pupils' individual phonics skills. They do show that most of the less-able pupils do not read often enough either in school or at home. Teachers do not consistently ensure that these pupils are heard reading in school on a daily basis to ensure that they practice, reinforce and extend their reading skills. The curriculum provides some interesting learning, for example, work about the Egyptians in Year 3 helps to expand pupils' understanding about different cultures. However, throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, the curriculum has a limited impact because it is not consistently tailored to pupils' individual needs and abilities in literacy and numeracy.

Good relationships and teachers' consistent approach to behaviour management ensure most lessons are calm, and make an appropriate contribution to pupils' social, moral and spiritual development. In both Nursery and Reception, teachers and adults work together to plan interesting activities that are well matched to children's different needs. A good balance is struck between children learning for themselves and the direct teaching of basic skills by adults. Children develop their language skills well in both Nursery and Reception. In Reception, daily focused literacy tasks in ability groups successfully promote early reading, phonics and writing skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Overall, pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Parents and carers believe that their children are safe in school, although a few rightly expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour and felt that learning is occasionally disrupted by a few pupils behaving inappropriately. The new executive headteacher has strengthened procedures and behaviour is improving now that the school's expectations are applied consistently by staff. Pupils develop positive relationships with each other and, at playtimes, older pupils support younger ones in sensibly moving around the school site. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are treated sensitively by staff and pupils in lessons and

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around the school. Pupils are courteous, friendly and helpful and understand right from wrong. Nevertheless, pupils' views and inspection evidence confirm that a generally good standard of behaviour is not maintained at all times. When lessons do not fully meet their needs, a few less-able boys, in particular, lose concentration and occasionally interrupt others.

Pupils feel safe at school and understand how to keep themselves safe. Curricular activities teach pupils how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations and pupils have a sound awareness of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. They say that although there are occasional incidents of inconsiderate behaviour in the playground, these stem from boisterous play. They are confident that adults deal with any such incidents appropriately and would do so should any bullying occur.

Attendance is average. The school is consistent in applying effective procedures for communicating with parents and carers over the importance of minimising absence.

Leadership and management

Attainment, progress and teaching quality have declined since the previous inspection. While steps are now being taken to redress this downturn, they have not yet had time to have an impact on improving pupils' achievement. Senior and middle leaders are receiving training but are not yet able to take a full part in determining the school's strategic direction. Although priorities for improvement rightly focus on raising pupils' achievement, too many inconsistencies in the quality provision are a barrier to significant and sustained improvement.

Teachers have welcomed the support they are being given for improving the quality of their teaching. However, new initiatives, such as the recent professional development in mathematics and working with colleagues in the federated school, are yet to have a full impact on raising pupils' achievement. The executive headteacher has accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She has united staff, established a common purpose and introduced a suitable leadership structure. There are now more rigorous checks on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and teachers are more involved in evaluating the impact of their teaching on pupils' progress. Leadership responsibilities have been distributed more widely across the staff but these changes are not yet providing demonstrable evidence that the school has sustained capacity for further improvement.

The governing body is led by an experienced and knowledgeable chair but its members are not in a position to robustly challenge the school because many are still receiving training. The curriculum does not provide an appropriate structure for the progressive development of pupils' basic skills, although it does make an adequate contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, there are interesting visits to places like the British Museum to support pupils' social and cultural development.

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The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. They include all the required checks on staff and appropriate child protection training. There is no evidence of discrimination but pupils do not achieve as well as they should so equality of opportunity is inadequate.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.



23 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Vale View Community School, Dover CT17 9NF

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views, including those who completed questionnaires. We found you to be very helpful and polite. You and your parents and carers told us that the school keeps you safe and that you feel safe, and we agree.

You will know that the reason for our visit was to look at the quality of the education you are receiving. As well as watching your lessons and looking at your books, we looked at information that the school has collected on your progress. We have found out that your new headteacher has started to make improvements, but at this stage the school is not doing as well as it should and needs some extra help. As a result we have said that it needs 'special measures'. This means that other inspectors will be visiting your school regularly to check how well it is improving.

We have judged that most of you are not making enough progress or reaching high enough standards in reading, writing and mathematics. We have asked the headteacher and governors to concentrate on making sure that:

- your work in lessons always builds on what you already know, and teachers make sure you have good opportunities to develop your skills in reading, spelling and solving mathematical problems
- teaching is at least good throughout the school
- leaders and governors of the school keep a careful eye on how well you are doing, and help you to learn well.

You can help too by always working as hard as you can.

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick
Lead inspector

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