

The Vale Primary School

84-92 Beaconsfield Road, Langley Vale, Epsom, KT18 6HP

Inspection dates

2–3 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although pupils' progress and the standards attained by the end of Year 6 have improved significantly in reading and writing, progress in mathematics is slower and standards are not as high.
- Pupils' work indicates that teachers' expectations are not always high enough, resulting in inconsistent progress in different year groups; the quality of pupils' work in the last school year, and the amount covered, varied considerably between year groups.
- While senior leaders and governors have been successful in driving improvements in reading and writing, and in other aspects of the school's provision, recently implemented strategies to improve achievement in mathematics have yet to have a significant impact on pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make generally good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Results at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been consistently above average for several years.
- As a result of more effective teaching and rigorous assessment, pupils' progress in reading and writing in Years 3 to 6 has improved and is now good.
- Standards in reading and writing at the end of Year 6 are above average.
- Pupils who receive additional funding do as well as the others because the money is well spent.
- Effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs enables them to make progress similar to the majority.
- Pupils are safe and behave well in lessons and around the school.
- The effectiveness and impact of governance has improved significantly.
- Senior leaders and governors have successfully focused on improving pupils' achievement in reading and writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed fifteen lessons, of which seven were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, with the school’s middle and senior leaders and with a representative of the local authority.
- They took account of the 50 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of school documentation including records of the monitoring of teaching, the school improvement plan, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding and extracts from the school’s tracking of pupils’ progress. A scrutiny of pupils’ written work was also undertaken and inspectors listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Julie Sackett

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Vale is a slightly smaller-than-average primary school.
- The school provides a breakfast and an after-school club. These are managed independently of the school and are inspected separately.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The school provides for a small number of pupils from service families and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium).
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is lower than is typically found. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school also receives the pupil premium is well below the national average.
- The school has recently gained the Eco-Schools Award and the Healthy Schools' Award.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching enables pupils to make more consistently good progress, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - providing well-paced activities which challenge the full range of pupils, including the more able
 - securing consistency and accuracy in the assessment of pupils' attainment and their understanding
 - establishing shared high expectations of the quality of presentation of pupils' written work.
- Consolidate and improve pupils' achievement in mathematics in Years 3 to 6, by:
 - rigorous monitoring to ensure that pupils' progress is at least at the expected level year on year
 - providing good opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills
 - ensuring that staff are confident and accurate in their assessment of pupils' skills.
- Ensure that school leaders and managers, including governors, apply the model of good practice which has previously supported good improvement in reading and writing, in order to achieve a similar acceleration in pupils' progress in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter Reception with skills generally above those expected for their age. Almost all attain, and a large proportion exceed, the levels expected by the end of the year. Personal and social development and aspects of language and communication are particularly strong. Provision and progress are generally good, although the school aims to increase the effectiveness of outdoor learning opportunities.
- Although standards in writing dipped slightly in 2011, there is a broadly consistent pattern of above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. While there was some variability in the quality of teaching seen, pupils' work largely confirms that pupils make sustained progress during Years 1 and 2. This reflects, in part, positive improvements to assessment practice and a greater focus on the needs of more able pupils.
- The teaching of phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) to support pupils' reading skills is effective in Years 1 and 2, although not yet as fully embedded in Years 3 to 6. The deployment of pupil premium funding to extra learning support, to meeting social and emotional needs and to the part-funding of a family support worker, is effective in supporting pupils' achievement and well-being. The majority of these pupils make better than expected progress as a result.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average overall, although standards in mathematics were closer to average in 2012. Pupils made good progress in reading and writing in both 2011 and 2012. However, progress in mathematics has not been better than satisfactory. Pupils in some year groups, for example, produced less written work than expected, so that their mathematical skills, in particular, or their capacity to apply these skills, are not developing sufficiently rapidly. Pupils in Year 6 are consequently reliant upon a rapid acceleration in learning.
- The school supports disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those being supported by the pupils premium effectively. Occasionally, however, tasks set in lessons are over challenging for these pupils. Effective training for teaching assistants, and increased accountability for the progress pupils make, ensure that they make similar progress to the majority.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- School leaders have focused recently on improving the consistency and quality of teaching. While significant staff change in the last year has been disruptive, greater consistency in classroom practice and higher expectations of what pupils can achieve have supported improved progress in reading and writing. However, there has not been sufficient urgency in promoting similar effective practice in the teaching of mathematics.
- There is still variability in the quality of teaching. Good overall progress in reading and writing is often dependent upon a significant boost from high-quality teaching in Year 6. Expectations of the quantity of pupils' recorded work and the quality of its presentation are not always high enough. The school has recognised this weakness.
- In almost all lessons, relationships are good. Where learning is really effective, the pace is brisk, pupils' interest is engaged and assessment is used well to match work closely to pupils' needs. This was evident in an outstanding Year 6 science lesson on condensation. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge, stimulating presentation, the high level of practical involvement and pupils' interest and commitment all ensured brisk progress for all groups.
- In less effective lessons, the pace is sometimes slow and the work is not always sufficiently challenging. Carpet sessions can be over extended and this can constrain the effectiveness of learning. Teachers do not always respond promptly enough when pupils' attention wanders.
- Pupils in Reception generally learn well because staff provide a wide range of well-planned activities. The good induction programme ensures that children are well prepared for school,

settle quickly and sustain attention well. Effective intervention by adults ensures that children work cooperatively and learn quickly.

- The teaching of reading is good in Years 1 and 2, and progress has improved. Pupils receive a thorough grounding in recognising the sounds letters make. This systematic practice is moving through the school so that overall achievement in reading is mostly good.
- There are strengths in assessment across the school, with well-established practice in the use of individual targets and pupil self-assessment. There is some inconsistency in the quality of marking of pupils' work. Not all staff provide guidance as to the next steps in learning or expect pupils to respond. However, a weekly 'improvement time' session aims to strengthen practice in this area.
- School leaders ensure that support staff are appropriately deployed. Their work is mostly effective and enables targeted pupils to progress at a similar rate to the others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Where the teaching is most challenging, particularly in Year 6, behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning, are well motivated and enjoy school. The school has recently introduced Power Gems, a motivational programme to promote independent learning behaviours. When teaching is less inspiring, pupils tend to become restless. Most parents and carers who expressed a view feel that behaviour is good.
- Exclusions are rare and pupils have few concerns about behaviour. All pupils understand the significance of the 'behaviour pyramid', which is consistently implemented across the school. There are few recorded racist incidents or episodes of inappropriate behaviour, and significant disruption of lessons is rare. Pupils have confidence in the adults around them. There are no current reports of bullying of any type. Pupils understand that bullying may take different forms, such as misuse of the internet, or in response to physical differences or gender orientation. The school is working towards the award of the Anti-Bullying Charter Mark.
- The school is an inclusive community and provides for pupils with a range of needs. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are identified as vulnerable are supported effectively. The school is effective in ensuring there is no discrimination and that all pupils have equality of opportunity. The school supports the wider needs of pupils and their families through its partnership with the provider of the on-site breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Pupils have a good awareness of risk. This is supported well by the school's input on personal safety, particularly on road safety, safe cycling and 'stranger danger'. Pupils are generally very careful in the restricted confines of the hard playground.
- Attendance is above average. Persistent absence is rare. Pupils almost always arrive at school punctually.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The management team has successfully ensured increasingly effective teaching of reading and writing, and good progress by the end of Year 6, in the last three years. However, more recent action to improve pupils' progress in mathematics, or other inconsistencies in pupils' performance, has yet to have a significant impact.
- School self-evaluation is generally accurate. The school correctly identifies what needs to be done, but has not always tackled the issues with sufficient urgency. Monitoring and evaluation are accurate, although there has been a lack of rigour in challenging staff to set higher expectations for the quality of pupils' written work.
- School leaders are committed to improving the quality of teaching. School records indicate that the proportion of good teaching has increased, despite significant turbulence in staffing last year. The impact upon pupils' achievement has, however, been less evident.

Performance management procedures are well planned and provision for the professional development of all staff is good. The role of the middle managers has developed. They have an accurate view of strengths and areas for development of their subjects.

- The school receives effective support from its local authority.
- Issues raised at the last inspection have been tackled, including a re-casting of the curriculum in order to secure greater engagement. However, pupils do not yet achieve their full potential in mathematics. The school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.
- Mathematics has not, until recently, had the same prominence as reading and writing. There is some effective cross-curricular learning, notably in Year 6. Here, successfully integrated elements of geography, art and design and outdoor pursuits were observed in a mathematics lesson. The school ensures the effective teaching of science. Extra-curricular provision is good.
- Pupils' spiritual and moral development is effectively supported through collective worship and the religious education programme. Pupils have well-developed communication skills. Cultural awareness is promoted well through local, charitable and established international links with Kenya and Mexico. Pupils' commitment to environmental matters has been recognised in the gaining of the Eco-Schools Award.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is much more stable, following a period of turbulence
 - is increasingly involved in driving change, although it has, like school leaders, been slower to initiate effective action to boost performance in mathematics than in reading and writing
 - has a sound knowledge of school performance data and contributes to decisions about the deployment of funding, in particular the pupil premium, to raise pupils' achievement
 - ensures that safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	131991
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	402528

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	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debra Beer
Headteachers	Claire Regnard & Caroline Christer
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2010
Telephone number	01372 273639
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