

# Vernon Park Primary School

Peak Street, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 2NF

**Inspection dates** 16–17 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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 a good school because

- Disruption to staffing since the last inspection has limited the progress made, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils are not adept at using punctuation, spelling and grammar accurately or in applying their mathematical calculation skills to solve number problems.
- Inconsistency in the quality of teaching means that pupils make adequate rather than better progress.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching lacks sufficient rigour and school development planning is not focused tightly enough on raising pupils' achievement.
- The governing body does not challenge leaders rigorously enough about the school's performance.

### The school has the following strengths:

- The headteacher's vision for improvement is shared by the governing body and all staff, and morale is high. New appointments at the start of the term have strengthened the senior leadership team and stabilised staffing.
- There are examples of good and outstanding teaching. All teachers manage classrooms well, so relationships are good and lessons run smoothly.
- There has been a marked improvement in attendance over the last year.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they say they feel safe at all times in school.
- Children in the speech and language unit make good progress in their communication skills.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 22 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 13 teachers. Five joint observations were carried out with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, parents, staff, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Work in pupils' books and displays around the school were examined. Inspectors listened to groups of pupils read.
- Account was taken of the 10 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own parent surveys in planning and carrying out the inspection.

## Inspection team

Melvyn Hemmings, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Rebecca Lawton

Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- Vernon Park is larger than the average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportions of pupils supported through school action and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- It provides a speech and language centre for nursery and reception children from across the borough and a breakfast and after-school club. These are managed by the governing body.
- The school has experienced significant disruption to staffing, including in senior leadership, since the previous inspection.
- It has gained a number of national awards, including the Active Mark, and holds Healthy School status.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in writing and mathematics by:
  - improving pupils' skills in using accurate punctuation, spelling and grammar
  - extending opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects other than English
  - improving pupils' ability to apply their mathematical calculation skills to solve number problems.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by:
  - ensuring that teachers consistently provide appropriately challenging work for different groups
  - improving the quality of marking so that it gives pupils precise guidance on how to improve
  - formally sharing the good and outstanding practice evident in the school with all teaching staff, to further develop their own expertise.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - rigorously evaluating the quality of teaching to provide staff with precise areas for development and checking they respond to them successfully
  - improving school development planning so that it is tightly focused on raising achievement
  - ensuring that the governing body robustly challenges leaders about the school's performance.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below those expected for their age. They settle in quickly and show enthusiasm and enjoyment in all their activities, such as in the role play area set up as 'The Vernon Park Surgery'. At times, progress is limited by a lack of adult intervention in independent activities.
- Through the rest of the school, improvement in achievement since the last inspection has been restricted by disruption to staffing. This has resulted in a lack of continuity in learning because the school has relied heavily on supply teachers taking classes, particularly in Key Stage 1. Despite this, there has been a steady increase in attainment at both Key Stages 1 and 2, and by the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average in English and mathematics.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. They are attentive when listening to teachers and concentrate for lengthy periods. They work together well, as was evident in an information and communication technology lesson for pupils in Years 4 and 5, when they were working in pairs to create a PowerPoint presentation about the Roman Army.
- Pupils read widely and with enjoyment and understanding. They speak clearly to communicate their ideas. Pupils enjoy writing in a variety of styles, such as poetry and narrative writing, but lack accuracy in using punctuation, spelling and grammar.
- The mathematical calculation skills of pupils are secure. However, they are not good at using them to solve number problems in a variety of real-life situations.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same progress as other pupils because of the effective extra support they are given. Children in the speech and language unit make good progress because their individual needs are identified early and well-targeted teaching ensures their needs are met effectively.
- The funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is targeted well to provide small group intervention activities to raise their achievement in English and mathematics. This is evident in the way the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils is narrowing rapidly.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage adults provide activities that are practical and interesting across the areas for learning. There is a good balance between activities led by adults and those chosen by children. However, occasionally children would benefit from more adult guidance when working on independent tasks.
- Teaching in the speech and language unit is good and children make good progress.
- In Years 1 to 6, teachers have secure subject knowledge that enables them to ask relevant questions to find out what pupils know and to further their understanding. Pupils explain ideas concisely and with confidence. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and this contributes positively to their moral development.
- Activities are not consistently given that are appropriately challenging for different groups of pupils. Consequently, at times some pupils find work too easy and others too hard. This slows progress in some lessons.
- Teachers ensure that pupils' work is marked regularly. However, marking does not consistently provide pupils with the precise next steps they need to take to improve their work. Teachers do not place enough emphasis on developing pupils' writing skills by providing sufficient opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English.
- There is a small amount of teaching that is outstanding. This is characterised by pupils being given highly motivating activities that are well matched to their different abilities and that capture and maintain their interest. For example, in a mathematics lesson for pupils in Years 4 and 5, all groups of pupils made excellent progress in their understanding of expanded addition

and their ability to solve word problems because activities were pitched at exactly the right level. Leaders do not formally share such teaching with staff in order to further develop their expertise.

- Teaching assistants support pupils effectively throughout lessons. This is particularly the case for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium.
- Pupils' social development is promoted well. Teaching provides them with many opportunities to work together to share ideas and complete tasks. Teaching creates a positive climate for learning, with pupils saying, 'Teachers and other adults are friendly and really want us to do well.'

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around school is good. They are self-disciplined and encourage each other to act responsibly. Pupils are polite, courteous and considerate to others.
- Pupils know about the different kinds of bullying and say that bullying of any kind is rare. They are confident that staff will deal with any such behaviour promptly. The views of staff, pupils and parents and scrutiny of behaviour logs confirm that behaviour is good and has been so over time.
- Pupils' understanding s about how to keep themselves and others safe is comprehensive. They know about the dangers associated with roads, railways and water and the action to take if approached by a stranger. They say they feel safe in school and on visits.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is shown in the marked increase in overall attendance and the reduction in persistent absence. They say, 'We have lots of interesting things to do that keep us busy.' The inclusive nature of the school successfully encourages pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, to support each other and take part in all activities.
- Attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils want to learn and respect the right of others to do so. As a result, there is a calm atmosphere that is conducive to learning throughout the school.
- Pupils enhance the life of the school by taking on a variety of responsibilities, such as being a school councillor. In so doing, they give a voice to pupils as to how the school develops. This is evident in the way that, after consultation with pupils, the council persuaded leaders to provide a wider range of play equipment for use at lunchtimes.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- The determined leadership of the headteacher has successfully steered the school through the period of disruption to staffing, including in senior leadership, since the previous inspection. Although not meeting the initial targets for improvement, the headteacher has ensured a steady improvement in pupils' achievement at both Key Stages 1 and 2 during this difficult period. The relatively new senior leadership team has quickly gelled and been successful in developing a strong team spirit among the staff, who are fully committed to accelerating school improvement. The speech and language unit is well led.
- The effectiveness of the leadership of teaching, including performance management and professional development, has been diluted by staffing disruption. Nevertheless, improvements have been made and teachers are now more accountable for the progress that pupils make in their classes. There is a firmly established link between teachers' performance in meeting their targets and progression on the teachers' pay scale.
- Lesson observations are undertaken regularly by the headteacher and other staff. They provide areas for development, but these lack sufficient precision to bring about rapid improvement. Subsequent observations do not rigorously check if staff have responded positively to identified

areas for development.

- Self-evaluation is accurate and ensures that the correct areas for development are prioritised. However, the plans for improvement lack sharp focus and do not set robust and easily measurable targets for raising achievement. Nevertheless, the school's track record since the previous inspection demonstrates at least satisfactory ability to take the school forward.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling of discrimination is strong. Effective action is taken if any group is identified as falling behind and, as a result, there is little difference between the achievement of different groups of pupils. This is exemplified in the way that the school has successfully used the funding for pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium to narrow the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils.
- Staff show respect and courtesy for pupils and others, modelling professional standards in all of their work. There are good relationships at all levels which contribute positively to pupils' learning and development.
- The curriculum provides a variety of interesting and practical activities that are enhanced by extra-curricular activities and visits, such as to Manchester Airport. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Parents are kept informed about the activities in which their children are engaged and the progress they make.
- The local authority has provided effective support to enable the school to manage the difficult period since the previous inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are met.
  - Governors are supportive and maintain a visible presence in school.
  - The governing body does not challenge leaders about the school's performance robustly enough.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106082
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	405021

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	281
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Walter Brett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Mastrotonardo
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	31 January 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 480 4378
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