

Vale First and Middle School

Vale Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex, BN14 0DB

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- School leaders have acted firmly and effectively to improve the quality of teaching, which is now consistently good throughout the school.
- The standards that pupils reach in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school have risen substantially in recent years, and are consistently well above the national average.
- Pupils make good and increasingly rapid progress from their starting points.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have very few concerns about bullying and understand exceptionally well how to keep themselves safe.
- School leaders are united in their clear vision for the school, and their passionate commitment to further improvement.
- The rich and varied curriculum contributes extremely well to pupils' learning and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Members of the governing body know their school extremely well and hold leaders firmly to account for raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small proportion of teaching requires improvement, because occasionally teachers do not check pupils' progress sufficiently during lessons, or ensure that pupils are all fully engaged in activities.
- Teachers do not always give pupils sufficiently detailed written feedback to enable them to know how to improve the quality of their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 29 lessons taught by 27 teachers and teaching assistants, three of them together with the headteacher, as well as making shorter visits to a number of other lessons. They also listened to pupils read, looked at examples of pupils' work and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of, and individual, pupils; the Chair of the Governing Body and two members; members of staff; a representative of the local authority; and, informally, with a number of parents and carers.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' attainment and progress. They examined safeguarding procedures and records of the school's own lesson observations, and scrutinised self-evaluation and planning documents.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of 94 responses to the online Parent View survey, which were submitted before and during the inspection, as well as parents' and carers' responses to the school's own most recent survey, and 36 questionnaires completed by members of the teaching and support staff.

Inspection team

Robin Gaff, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Roger Fenwick	Additional inspector
Cliff Mainey	Additional inspector
Una Stevens	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through school action, just over one in 10, is broadly average. About one in 20 is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs. This proportion is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided by the government for looked after children, children of service families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below the national average. There are no children of service families currently on roll.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium, extra money received by the school for pupils who did not reach the expected level in English at the end of Key Stage 2, is also well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since its last inspection, there have been a number of changes in the teaching staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- The school is currently undertaking a substantial rebuilding programme, which is due to be completed in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils always make at least good progress in lessons by making sure that all teachers
 - check pupils' understanding and adapt activities if pupils are making faster or slower progress than the teachers had anticipated
 - include sufficiently stimulating activities so that all pupils maintain their interest and their work rate throughout lessons
 - include enough detailed comments in their marking of pupils' work in all subjects to enable pupils to know the next steps they need to take to improve it.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the school in the Reception class with skill levels that vary from year to year but which are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They settle in quickly and make good progress in their ability to work and play on their own as well as with other children. They thoroughly enjoy learning to link sounds to letters, and make rapid progress because their teachers make it exciting for them to learn to read and to write.
- Pupils continue to make good progress to reach above-average levels of attainment by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Pupils' performance in the national tests at the end of Year 6 indicates that they regularly reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are well above the national average. This shows that they have made good progress from their starting points.
- This is maintained in Year 7, where the school's own information about pupils' attainment, as well as reports from its partner secondary schools, shows that these pupils move on to Year 8 having reached levels that are above those normally found at this stage.
- The school has identified, and has quickly and successfully addressed, the reason for the dip in results in writing in 2012. The work of current pupils in Years 6 and 7, as well as the school's own reliable records, confirms that their attainment in writing is now above average and that they are making good progress.
- The standards reached by the very small number of pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium, as indicated by their performance in the 2012 national tests, was similar in mathematics to that of other pupils in the school. This indicates that this group of pupils was about a term ahead of all pupils nationally. In English, these pupils' results showed that they were about four terms behind other pupils in the school and all pupils nationally.
- The school has made extremely good use of the extra funding which it receives for this group of pupils, and of the Year 7 catch-up premium, by providing them with very effective additional support. This has ensured that they are now making good progress in both reading and writing, as well as in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least good and often outstanding progress because teachers and teaching assistants thoroughly understand their needs and adapt activities very well for them.
- Pupils throughout the school gain a good understanding of mathematical principles, which they apply successfully in solving problems in a variety of situations, including practical tasks.
- Most lessons proceed at a good pace, and pupils enjoy and make good progress in their learning. On the few occasions when pupils make slower progress, this is usually because teachers have not ensured that tasks engage pupils' interest throughout the lesson.
- Pupils read widely, and talk fluently and enthusiastically about the books they have read. Those who find it hard also enjoy reading, and are prepared to persevere in order to overcome their difficulties.
- A very large majority of parents and carers agree that their children are making good progress at the school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and establish good working relationships with them.
- They know their subjects well and succeed in sharing their enthusiasm for them with their pupils. Teachers plan a range of activities that are well matched to the different levels of ability represented in their classes and to pupils' different interests.
- For example, in an outstanding lesson based on the topic of Inuit painting, pupils' work showed that they were making excellent progress in understanding and using a range of painting and

drawing techniques. This was because of the teacher's highly skilful explanation and demonstration, and because she gave pupils tasks which fired their enthusiasm and built on what they had already learned. Teaching in this and in other subjects, such as music, makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

- Teachers ensure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from tasks which allow them to work at the right level and to make at least good progress. Teachers work very effectively with teaching assistants to ensure that these pupils participate fully in classroom activities.
- Teachers mostly use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and to increase their knowledge, by, for example, encouraging pupils to develop each other's answers to questions. Occasionally, however, pupils' progress is more limited because teachers do not clearly establish how much pupils have learned, and do not adapt tasks if pupils find them easier or harder than they had anticipated.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and make sure that pupils know how well they are doing. There are examples of outstanding practice in marking, especially in English, where teachers give pupils extremely clear feedback on what they have done well and what they need to do to make their work even better. They also give pupils frequent opportunities to respond to their comments, and to show that they have understood and are acting upon their teachers' advice.
- In other subjects, however, teachers' comments are sometimes too brief or too general to enable pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- A very large majority of the parents and carers who responded to Parent View and the school's own most recent survey agreed that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved and that they feel safe in school.
- Pupils report that behaviour has improved in recent years. They say that pupils normally behave very well in lessons, and that on the very few occasions when this is not the case, this is because teachers have not provided stimulating enough activities to keep the whole class interested and on task. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, however, help to ensure that, for the most part, little time in lessons is wasted.
- Attendance has been consistently above average, and continues to rise.
- Pupils behave safely and sensibly around the school, including in the playground, where space at present is considerably restricted because of the current building programme.
- Pupils from different backgrounds play harmoniously together. They say that incidences of racist behaviour are extremely rare and that they wholeheartedly support the school's 'zero tolerance' policy. This demonstrates the school's highly effective promotion of pupils' social and moral development.
- The school has not had to exclude any pupils in recent years, because it has particularly effective techniques for managing and improving the behaviour of the very small number of pupils for whom it has been a cause for concern.
- Pupils are not worried about bullying. They know about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and name-calling based on prejudice, but say that it seldom occurs, and that when it does, teachers deal with it promptly and effectively.
- Pupils understand very well how to keep themselves safe. The school has made sure, for example, that they are fully aware of the potential hazards represented by the current building work.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, working closely with the governing body, has been highly successful in raising

pupils' achievement by improving the quality of teaching throughout the school. Ably supported by the deputy headteacher, he has ensured that newly appointed members of staff, including senior and middle leaders, have adjusted quickly to their new roles, and are united in sharing his passion to improve the school still further.

- Leaders have successfully addressed the weaknesses identified by the school's last inspection, and have acted swiftly and decisively to eliminate inadequate teaching.
- These factors demonstrate the school's strong capacity for further improvement.
- Leaders manage the staff's performance extremely well. They regularly observe teachers and scrutinise pupils' work, focusing relentlessly on accelerating pupils' progress, and make sure that all teachers know exactly what they need to do to improve their practice. Newly qualified teachers speak highly of the support they have received since joining the school.
- Leaders have been successful in narrowing any gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils, and in ensuring that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve very well. This, together with the fact that the school is a harmonious community in which pupils from different backgrounds relate exceptionally well to one another, demonstrates their considerable success in promoting equality of opportunity and in tackling any potential discrimination.
- The local authority has provided the school with good support, for example in helping to ensure that all middle leaders are able to judge accurately and to improve the quality of teaching in the areas for which they are responsible.
- The school has adapted its curriculum extremely well so that it meets the needs and interests of pupils of different ages and abilities, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Pupils throughout the school greatly enjoy learning through a series of themes and topics, which are enriched by special events.
- Children in the Reception class, for example, could scarcely contain their glee as the headteacher, convincingly playing the part of the Big Bad Wolf, blew down the Three Little Pigs' house of straw, with the help of a wind machine provided by the building company. This contributed a great deal to the children's appreciation of the story, which the staff use successfully as a platform for reading, writing and other activities. Meanwhile, older pupils were developing their knowledge and understanding of life during the Middle Ages, as well as a range of practical skills, by making pottage, a kind of soup, following a recipe of the period.
- The school's strong promotion of pupils' spiritual and cultural development is demonstrated by the high quality of pupils' art work around the school and the opportunities all pupils have to learn to play a musical instrument.
- Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. Most agree that it provides them with valuable information about their children's progress, and that it responds well to any concerns they raise.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body includes a wide range of experience and skills, which members update regularly by undertaking relevant training. Governors have an extremely good understanding of pupils' achievement, and how it compares with that of pupils in other schools. They are very much aware of the quality of teaching and what leaders have done to improve it. They have set leaders challenging but realistic targets and hold them rigorously to account for their progress towards achieving them. Governors also make sure that any pay increases and promotions for teachers are closely related to successful performance in their roles. The governing body has ensured that the school is on a firm financial footing, for example by carefully monitoring expenditure on the building programme. Governors know how the additional pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is being used to improve the achievement of those pupils for whom it is intended. They also ensure that the school comfortably meets all requirements for safeguarding pupils.

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	125865
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	402359

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	640
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Jenkins
Headteacher	Martin Garratt
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 July 2010
Telephone number	01903 872322
Fax number	01903 873681
Email address	office@valeschool.org

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