

Vermont School

Vermont Close, Southampton, SO16 7LT

Inspection dates 25–26 June 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is expert in getting pupils ready to learn so that they enjoy school and make good progress in all the subjects they study.
- Pupils' behaviour improves from the time that they join the school and is good throughout every day.
- Staff make sure that pupils have a good understanding of the next steps in learning that they need to take and this supports their successful learning.
- Parents are very positive about the school and say how their children have 'now got a real buzz for learning' that they have never had before.
- Classroom staff work together very well to get the best out of the pupils by providing many exciting opportunities for learning.
- Reading is taught well so that pupils quickly come to enjoy books.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead from the front and have brought about good improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few teachers respond less skilfully than others to managing behaviour consistently, and occasionally learning is interrupted.
- The information about the progress individuals make is not reported by senior leaders in a way that is easy for staff and governors to understand.
- Lesson activities do not always match up to what pupils' learning need and sometimes lessons move on too slowly. This holds back some pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- Five lessons were observed, all of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders, school staff and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector talked to pupils in lessons about their work, looked at books, listened to some read and talked to a representative group of pupils.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents and took account of 17 questionnaires returned by members of staff.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View for these to be examined.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at progress data, performance management information and records relating to behaviour and attendance, as well as documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Mick Megee, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All pupils are boys and have a statement of special educational needs.
- All pupils have social, emotional and behaviour difficulties and a small number have additional moderate learning difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those that are looked after by the local authority.
- The school provides an outreach service for up to 50 pupils who are at risk of exclusion in their own mainstream schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all pupils make at least good progress by:
 - ensuring that lesson activities always match the needs and capabilities of everyone
 - taking action early on to nip in the bud any potential disruption to lessons
 - moving lesson activities along at a good pace so that pupils remain fully engaged.
- Improve the quality of information provided to staff and members of the governing body by reporting achievement information in a way that is easy for them to digest.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' attainment is carefully assessed when they start at the school. The records show that almost all pupils have low levels of literacy and numeracy because of their difficulties in learning, behaviour and attendance.
- Pupils' progress is reviewed each term. These reviews and lesson observations show that the majority of pupils make good progress from their starting points and that their attainment in literacy and numeracy is broadly average when they leave in Year 6.
- Parents and carers are very pleased with the progress their children make. One typical comment from a parent was, 'The school has given my son more self-confidence than he has ever had. This has allowed him to make the academic progress he never has before. He has the confidence to read aloud and he feels his opinions are a valid contribution to a discussion.'
- Expert and consistent teaching in phonics (the sounds that letters make) means that progress in reading is good. Throughout the day, the staff encourage pupils to practise their reading so that they develop self-confidence and enjoy picking up a book and reading out loud.
- Pupils are given frequent opportunities to work with a member of staff on their own individual programmes in English and mathematics, so that progress is good in these subjects.
- There is no discernible difference between the overall progress of any groups of pupils in English and mathematics. This includes pupils with behaviour or learning difficulties and those eligible for funds from the pupil premium, who are given additional individual attention in reading and numeracy where this is required. The funds are also used effectively to provide skilled teaching for specific groups that aims to boost the progress of selected pupils.
- If any pupil is identified as being at risk of not achieving their target, timely and effective action is taken to ensure that this does not happen.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and teaching assistants use their initiative well in lessons to support and encourage pupils to do well, thus ensuring good progress.
- Parents and carers appreciate the lengths that teachers go to for their children, saying things like, 'We're really impressed by the way the staff know how to get the best out of the pupils.'
- As a matter of routine, teachers make clear what each pupil has to achieve at the beginning of the lesson. This means that pupils have a good understanding of where the lesson is going and what they have to do to be successful.
- The school sets each pupil learning targets in English and mathematics and meticulously notes the progress the pupils are making on the school's tracking documents. Most pupils know their individual targets well because staff refer to them frequently in lessons.
- Teachers help pupils to improve their reading skills by systematically teaching the linking of sounds to letters, and by promoting reading and writing in every lesson. Staff can often be seen sharing and enjoying reading books with a pupil.
- The staff go out of their way to provide memorable experiences for the pupils. During a recent school holiday, staff came in to build an alien spacecraft in the school quad that 'landed' during the holidays and a parent's friend dressed up to look like Neil Armstrong and confronted the pupils as they returned after the Easter holiday. This inspired a few weeks of space-related activities
- Staff give good feedback to pupils in lessons and when marking written work in their books. The feedback includes detailed information and prompts about what they need to do to improve. Pupils value the opinions of the staff. For example, in one lesson, a pupil who had been successful in his individual work asked, 'Can I show Miss?'
- Most teachers use their assessment information well to set work at the right level for the pupils. In a few lessons, however, teachers do not match activities sufficiently precisely to the learning needs of all the pupils, for example by providing worksheets that match the range of

literacy levels in the class.

- Pupils enjoy lessons and are often provided with opportunities to learn on their own for example on computer tablets. Occasionally, the pace in lessons is too slow and pupils lose concentration and some become disruptive.
- Most staff manage the pupils' behaviour, sometimes challenging behaviour sensitively, and step in early when pupils are becoming restless or upset. One or two teachers are not so skilful at this and do not take effective action quickly enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- All the pupils join the school with a negative view of education, having experienced serious difficulties with learning and managing their own behaviour at their previous schools. As a priority, the school successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and gets the pupils back on track and ready to learn so that they make good progress.
- A few pupils have deep-seated issues that slow down their ability to regain control quickly over their feelings and anger. However, for most pupils, the school's records show that there is rapid improvement in their personal development.
- Staff spend time helping the pupils to understand their feelings and to improve the way they deal with stress. Pupils gradually come to recognise when learning is becoming difficult for them, and take their own appropriate action. For example, in one lesson, a pupil realised that he was becoming anxious about a noisy activity and moved to a quieter space where he could feel calmer and continue his activity untroubled.
- Much of the improvement in behaviour has been brought about by the school's focus on providing a pleasant, tolerant but consistent learning environment. Parents and carers particularly like the way that the 'slate is always wiped clean' following an incident if a pupil has lost control and become very upset.
- The small number of pupils in the school means that staff quickly get to know the pupils and understand their needs. This, together with good training in defusing potential problems early, means that most staff maintain a good working atmosphere through the day.
- Parents and carers are very pleased with the progress their children make in life skills. Many say that the school has helped to transform their children's and their family's lives by improving their children's behaviour.
- A typical response from a parent said, 'His school life before Vermont had been not much short of disastrous, with numerous exclusions and a genuine hatred of attending. The incredible staff at Vermont, his class teachers, classroom assistants, head, deputy head and reception staff have turned my child from the above in to the loveable, bouncy, happy, funny, content character I have today.'
- During the inspection, pupils were pleasant and well mannered and behaved well most of the time. In lessons, they have a good attitude to learning and this helps them to make good progress. When the teacher asked if anyone would like to read to the inspector, a forest of hands shot up – a testament to the good work of the school in restoring confidence and enjoyment in reading.
- Pupils show that they care about each other by the way they cooperate and work together in lessons and in assemblies. In lessons, teachers give pupils plenty of chances to work together with each other in pairs and groups, and class teams provide a very good role model of what cooperation can achieve.
- The school has a very effective reward system whereby pupils earn different colour bands for good work and behaviour, which has had a very positive impact on behaviour. The pupils agree that there is a lot of prestige in getting to a gold band, earning them the right to move independently around the school and attend special 'gold band' trips.
- Pupils know what they have to do in order to keep themselves safe. They know that they have to consider their own actions carefully and use their self-control at all times. In assemblies, the staff give them the opportunity to reflect on how to behave considerately to others.

- Pupils feel very secure in the school and well cared for. Staff keep a close watch on pupils and encourage or guide the pupils into making sensible decisions. The vast majority of parents agree with pupils that bullying is infrequent and that the staff deal with any problems quickly and effectively.
- Attendance is below average, although there is a wide variation from a small number of persistent non-attenders to over a third of the pupils who have 100% attendance this year. Good partnership arrangements between the school and the Education Welfare Service, however, mean that all pupils make some improvement after joining the school. Robust action is always taken where this is required.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together, and are driving the school forward at a brisk pace. They have resolved the key issues from the last inspection and have introduced new procedures and systems that show their commitment to further raising the achievement of the pupils.
- The staff support the senior leaders and each other well and morale is high. All staff are determined to give each pupil every opportunity to succeed. Any discrimination is tackled vigorously in order to make sure that all groups succeed equally well.
- The senior leaders manage the performance of teachers well, providing insightful comments and suggestions about their teaching and setting clear targets for improvement.
- The school evaluates itself accurately. The school's new tracking systems are a great improvement and are yielding very useful information that the senior leaders can analyse to check whether any group of pupils is underachieving.
- The way that the information is reported is not completely user-friendly to staff and members of the governing body. The school has recognised this and has planned improvements for next term.
- The joint observations undertaken during the inspection and external monitoring show that the headteacher has a very good understanding of what makes a good lesson, and identifies weaknesses clearly and accurately.
- The headteacher delegates responsibilities well, to ensure that leadership is distributed throughout the school, including to teaching assistants. Subject leaders check up on teaching and progress in their own subjects and several are receiving additional training in leadership.
- The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils well and strongly supports their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The school has recently restructured its curriculum, basing it around themes that will capture the pupils' interest such as the Rainforest, Chocolate and Space. The pupils experience exciting opportunities such as a visit to the British Museum in London, and interviewing a Paralympics gold medallist for the local television station.
- The local authority provides good, appropriate support through a very effective improvement adviser who regularly checks the school's performance and provides good guidance. Other personnel, such as the education welfare officer and social workers, provide strong support to the school and the children's families.
- The school's partnership with parents contributes significantly to the achievement of the pupils. Parents are delighted with the school, but say that they would like more information on how the behaviour systems work so that they can promote good behaviour at home.
- The school family support worker effectively supports pupils and their families outside school hours, for example by arranging activities during the school holidays.
- The school provides a very effective outreach service for pupils at risk of exclusion in their own mainstream schools. This service is highly valued by both the local authority and the schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body brings a good range of experience to its work and provides good challenge and support to the school. Its members know about the school's performance,

including how well pupils are achieving, through analysing reports from the senior leaders and frequent visits to the school, including observations of teaching. Governors have attended training and are experienced in how to judge the quality of teaching and the use of the performance management systems. They have a good understanding of what action is taken to identify and overcome any weaknesses in teaching, and how good teachers are rewarded. Governors know about the resources that are required to fund the school's priority activities. They are involved in the decision-making about how the additional pupil premium money is used. They are developing their expertise in checking up on the impact of the use of the money. Governors conscientiously make sure that all statutory duties, including safeguarding, are met

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 pupil's 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 pupil's 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	116625
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	405656

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	8–11
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Len Mockett
Headteacher	Barry Smith
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2011
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