

Valewood Primary School

Sherwood Avenue, Liverpool, Merseyside, L23 7YG

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2014

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement is good. They make at least good and sometimes outstanding progress across the school. Pupils reach at least nationally expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching has improved. Consistently good teaching across the school is enabling pupils to do increasingly well in every year group.
- Teachers work together effectively with the well-trained teaching assistants, contributing well to pupils' learning.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are supported very well and, as a result, they make at least the same good progress as other pupils.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They say they feel very safe and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Parents have a high regard for the way staff care for their children and help them to thrive.
- Strong, aspirational leadership by the headteacher, ably supported by an effective governing body, has been a key factor in moving the school from satisfactory to good. The school is in a strong position to continue to improve.
- Senior and middle leaders make thorough and regular checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Pupils are highly motivated to learn and work hard in lessons because the subjects they learn capture their interests so well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement in writing is not as good as in reading and mathematics. Too few pupils make better than expected progress or reach the higher levels in this subject.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching to accelerate pupils' progress even more, especially in writing.
- Writing tasks for the most able pupils are sometimes too easy.
- Marking in pupils' topic work does not always provide the same good guidance to help them improve their writing that they are given in their English books.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons including two with the headteacher.
- The inspectors also looked at examples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read. They observed the teaching of reading skills and talked to pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those that they were currently reading.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils about their work. Inspectors held meetings with four governors. They spoke to a representative of the local authority and met with members of the school staff.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and at the parents' forum meeting held during the inspection. They took account of 61 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 28 responses to staff questionnaires completed during the inspection were also considered.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including external reviews of the school's work, safeguarding documents, records of current standards and progress, the school's strategic plan and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. Minutes from governing body meetings and reports produced by the headteacher were also considered.

Inspection team

Lyn Pender, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Howard

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most other primary schools.
- Almost all pupils are White British. No pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well-below average. An above-average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding is below the national average. This additional funding is provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school has experienced some changes to staffing since the previous inspection. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2013 and the leadership team was re-structured at that time.
- The school provides before- and after-school clubs for its pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has been awarded the Eco School Silver award and has International School status; it also has the United Nations' Rights Respecting School, Recognition of Commitment award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure writing tasks are hard enough and challenge pupils to do their best, particularly for the most able, so that pupils make faster progress and more reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Ensure that the good quality of marking to develop pupils' writing skills shown in English books is also provided when they write in their topic work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school with skills and understanding that are generally typical for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and most join Year 1 working at or above the expected levels in all areas of learning. Children develop positive attitudes to learning throughout their time in the Reception class and take these with them as they move up through the school.
- Since the previous inspection there have been ongoing improvements in reading and mathematics and pupils often reach above-average standards in these subjects at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Most pupils make at least the progress expected of them in reading and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 and a high proportion do better than this.
- Gains in writing have not been as consistent. Attainment in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013 was above average. However, attainment in writing overall at the end of Year 6 was slightly below average and too few pupils reached the higher levels. Pupils in Year 6 made expected progress in writing but made much better progress in reading and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils working above the expected levels for their age in writing has risen across the school in the current year, but this positive development is still at an early stage.
- Standards in reading have risen quickly since the previous inspection. Letters and sounds are taught successfully and many pupils meet the required standard in the Year 1 reading assessment. At the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2013, attainment in reading was well above the national average.
- The most able pupils do well in reading and mathematics but less so in writing, although this is an improving picture and more pupils in the current year are reaching the higher levels in this subject in all classes.
- As a result of early identification of need and good levels of support, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least similar progress to other pupils in the school given their differing abilities and starting points.
- In Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of the small number of pupils supported by pupil premium funding, most of whom are known to be eligible for free school meals, was around two terms behind that of other pupils in the year group in English and mathematics. The school has addressed this deficit quickly. In the current year, gaps between the attainment of the pupil premium group and that of other pupils are closing rapidly because, across the school, all pupils are making good progress. This reflects effective action by the school and a commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for every pupil.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching was judged to be satisfactory at the school's last inspection. As a result of leaders' decisive action it is now good overall and there are examples of outstanding practice. This is resulting in ongoing improvements in pupils' achievement.
- A lively range of subjects and activities (the curriculum) and good teaching in the Reception class enable children to make a good start in their learning. They quickly become interested and curious learners and play and learn happily together.
- Learning across the school is well-planned and exciting activities are provided that capture pupils' imaginations well. Subjects are woven together into interesting topics that allow pupils to practise a range of skills and recall learning from previous lessons. In a Year 6 science lesson, for example, pupils enthusiastically used Venn and Carroll diagrams to sort animals by the characteristics recalled from previous lessons. Skilful questioning and careful explanations by the class teacher quickly identified misconceptions, resolved uncertainties and extended pupils learning exceedingly well.

- Pupils learn well when work is set at the right level to meet the needs of pupils. Teachers know the levels that pupils are working at and use this information to set activities that allow them to make good progress. In a few cases, work is not set at the right level. As a result pupils, especially the most able, are given writing tasks that are too easy and their progress slows.
- Pupils take a pride in their work and presentation in books is of a high standard. English and mathematics books are marked accurately and teachers provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve. All pupils are encouraged to respond to teachers' written comments; this is a real strength as it helps reinforce learning. However, some marking in pupils' topic books does not provide the same good quality of guidance to help pupils improve their writing.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and skilful in supporting teaching and learning. They work closely with teachers to provide good support for pupils, especially those who are disabled or have special educational needs. Consequently, very few pupils leave the school without attaining at least the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics and are well-prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Many challenging issues are considered, particularly by the older pupils, including their recent mature reflections on the Holocaust memorial events.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Behaviour around school and in class is exemplary. Pupils work hard in lesson; they concentrate well and often become engrossed in their learning. They are extremely well-mannered and welcoming to visitors.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that they feel very safe in and out of school because they are cared for so well by teachers and other adults. They have an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves safe on the internet and older pupils recognise the need to use mobile phones sensibly.
- Relationships between pupils and adults and between pupils themselves are excellent. The 'Valewood Values' drawn up by pupils and adults permeate everything that happens in this school where everyone is treated equally.
- Pupils are adamant that bullying is extremely rare and that adults take swift action if incidents do occur. They understand the different forms including cyber and prejudiced-based bullying.
- The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well.
- Pupils take on a number of important roles within the school and take their duties very seriously. Members of the school council, for example, take regular 'learning walks' with school leaders to check if the 'Conditions for Learning' that have been agreed by all in the school are in place.
- A wide variety of enrichment activities, including residential visits and trips out to places linked to the subjects being studied are provided. As one pupil stated, 'It helps make it real.' The range of out-of-hours activities provided is well-attended.
- The before- and after-school clubs are well supported. They provide a range of activities in a safe and secure setting.
- The high profile placed on the need to attend school regularly and on time has led to continued improvements. As a result attendance is above average.

The leadership and management are good

- A strength of leadership and management is the way in which all members of staff and governors operate as an effective team with a common ambition to drive improvement and raise standards. The headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher and other leaders, has worked successfully to address past weaknesses. Teaching and pupils' progress have improved significantly since the last inspection and the school, consequently, has good capacity to improve further in the future.

- Leaders' checks on teaching and pupils' achievement are rigorous and the outcomes are used to identify staff training needs. Leaders ensure that teachers pay is firmly linked to pupils' progress.
- The school evaluates its own performance well. Clear and detailed plans are effective because they are based on accurate data and identify suitable actions to tackle weaknesses. The need to further improve achievement in writing is clearly at the forefront of leaders' current plans.
- The skills of middle and senior leaders have improved significantly since the last inspection. All leaders accurately check their areas of responsibility and have a good understanding of where strengths and weaknesses lie. Their good leadership is having a positive impact on raising standards, for example, in improving pupils' reading skills and their understanding of calculation and number.
- The school has developed subject plans which enliven teaching, build on what pupils already know and ensure that they are motivated to learn. The use of local resources such as the Museum of Liverpool and the woods within the school grounds helps enrich their learning. Music and art are strengths and pupils confidently use computers to help with their learning. This means that they develop the skills they need to make good progress in creativity, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. A range of enrichment activities, such as art and music effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The primary school sports funding has been allocated effectively to provide additional opportunities for pupils to develop their sporting skills. New sports this year include fencing and lacrosse and pupils have more opportunities to take part in competitive sports with their local cluster of schools. All of this is enabling pupils to become more active and is helping to promote a healthy lifestyle well.
- The local authority provides effective and proportionate support for the school. Regular monitoring and specific training, for example, in ensuring that teachers accurately judge pupils' progress and attainment, have made a positive contribution to the school's drive to improve.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. Class representatives on the parents' forum meet regularly with school leaders to help ensure their views are heard and taken into account.
- All safeguarding procedures are securely in place, meet statutory requirements well and are rigorously applied. Leaders effectively promote equality of opportunity for all members of the school community and are active in tackling discrimination.
- The school is an active member of the Capital Cluster of schools in the Crosby area.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is knowledgeable and well-organised. Governors are well-informed about the school's performance. They receive detailed information about the quality of teaching and make regular visits to gain first-hand views of the life of the school. As a result governors have an extremely clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this information to very effectively hold school leaders to account. Governors make sure that resources are used efficiently to support the school's drive to improve outcomes for all pupils. For example, they have approved the use of the pupil premium funding to provide support for pupils who need more help in lessons and through the provision of one-to-one sessions. They have closely checked the impact of this on pupils' achievement. Governors have set suitable performance targets for the headteacher which link clearly to the school's improvement plans and ensure that teachers' pay is linked to pupils' achievement. The governing body takes its duty to ensure all pupils are kept safe very seriously. Safeguarding arrangements are checked regularly.

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	104890
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	430991

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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Acting chair	Paul Cook
Headteacher	Helen Tantouri
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2012
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