

Valley Primary Academy

Gentry Place, Norwich, Norfolk NR5 8XZ

Inspection dates

14–15 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics is not consistently good in all classes. Not all teachers are as effective as others in meeting pupils' needs.
- Pupils' progress, while improving, is not consistently strong in all classes. Where teaching is less effective, and teachers' expectations are not high enough, some pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics does not build on pupils' prior knowledge sequentially. Pupils do not develop their learning in subjects, such as science and geography, as they move through the school.
- Too many pupils have fallen behind with their reading in the past. The support currently provided to them is not enabling them to catch up sufficiently. Consequently, some pupils are unable to have access to the wider curriculum.
- There is a lack of clear leadership of the early years. Staff are therefore not given the direction and support they need to improve teaching and learning and be secure in carrying out assessments accurately.
- Teachers lack knowledge and understanding of how to support pupils who speak English as an additional language. Consequently, these pupils are not supported well in classes and are not making good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and trustees have a clear vision for the curriculum. They know what they want to teach and how and are beginning to implement plans.
- Leaders have been successful in improving behaviour. Pupils behave well in school because staff use systems for managing behaviour consistently.
- The introduction of a structured phonics programme has improved the teaching of reading and pupils' progress in reading.
- Staff provide a high level of care for all pupils, particularly in meeting their social and emotional needs.
- Attendance has improved because leaders are rigorous in following up pupils' absences.
- Leaders provide wide-ranging support for pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They understand the need to expand pupils' horizons and aspirations.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - training for staff gives all teachers strong subject knowledge
 - teachers use assessment information to plan tasks that are more finely tailored to pupils' individual needs, including pupils who speak English as an additional language
 - teachers understand and implement the newly developed curriculum so that teaching in subjects such as geography and science is improved.
- Improve provision in the early years by ensuring that:
 - staff support learning more effectively during children's independent activities
 - assessments are accurate and based on secure evidence of pupils' learning over time
 - there is clearer oversight and leadership of the early years to further drive improvements.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - ensuring through staff training that all staff have equally high expectations of pupils
 - embedding new curriculum plans so that pupils develop their knowledge and understanding in subjects other than English and mathematics progressively as they move through the school
 - ensuring that support provided for older pupils is more effective in developing their reading skills, so they can have access to the wider curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the predecessor school was inspected, the school has undergone many changes, including many changes of leadership. Over this period, standards and pupils' behaviour declined dramatically. Leaders prioritised improving behaviour and have been successful in this. They have established a calm learning environment in lessons and around the school. Alongside this, they have improved the physical building, developing an attractive library and early years outdoors area to create an ethos where pupils know they are cared for and where pupils feel safe and happy.
- Leaders and trustees are determined to ensure that pupils, many of whom are disadvantaged, achieve well. They have an accurate view of the school based on thorough checks on teaching and learning. They have eradicated inadequate teaching and are systematically tackling the remaining weaknesses they have identified in teaching and learning. Plans for improvement created across the trust, but tailored to Valley School, are well structured and clearly identify what will be achieved and when.
- Leaders rightly prioritised the development of early reading skills as a key platform for further improvement. They introduced a programme for teaching phonics, providing training to ensure this is delivered well. This is having a positive impact on improving the reading skills of pupils in the early years and key stage 1.
- Leaders and the trust provide high-quality and effective training to help staff improve their practice. For example, staff visited a school in London and are working with staff there to raise their expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Expert staff from across the trust support teachers by delivering whole-staff training, coaching and in-class support. Newly qualified teachers who spoke with inspectors said that they have been well supported in developing their practice.
- Leaders provide good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders are determined to provide pupils with wide-ranging learning opportunities to enable them to develop into well-rounded, caring and responsible individuals. They carefully select experiences locally and beyond, such as visiting the opera and taking part in art activities with the University of East Anglia.
- Leaders carefully plan for the needs of the many disadvantaged pupils at the school. They consider pupils' social and emotional development and provide support to ensure that pupils are ready to learn. For example, wider opportunities are used to broaden pupils' vocabulary so that they can use this in their reading and writing and in other subjects. The school's pastoral support manager works with pupils and their families to tackle pupils' absence as well as to help parents support their child's learning at home. This effective support is now beginning to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have given careful thought to the creation of new curriculum plans, consulting with staff and pupils to identify the knowledge that needs to be prioritised and how this should be taught as pupils progress through the school. Leaders recognise the importance of pupils encountering vocabulary and key concepts repeatedly and in different contexts. An example is learning about democracy when studying the ancient Greeks and when learning about modern Britain. However, these plans are under

development and are yet to be fully understood and implemented by teachers. Consequently, teaching and learning in subjects such as geography and science is inconsistent, and pupils do not build on their knowledge systematically as they move through the school.

- The quality of teaching and learning is variable across classes as some staff are new to the school and have not benefited from the training provided previously. Leaders have clear plans to secure improvements through support and training and hold teachers to account for the quality of their work appropriately. However, because teaching quality is variable, the progress that pupils make also varies between classes, and in some classes pupils' progress is not strong enough from their starting points.
- Middle leadership is at an early stage of development. The trust has provided support, for example moving a mathematics lead into the school from another school in the trust. However, some aspects of middle leadership, such as for early years, are not strong enough because trust plans to develop this have not yet been implemented.

Governance of the school

- Trustees responsible for governance are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They draw their information from reports that focus on pupils' achievements in all year groups, from meetings with key trust and school staff and from regular visits to the school. They provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support for leaders. For example, they challenged leaders about the reading outcomes previously and so were able to understand and support the investment in a structured reading programme.
- Trustees ensure that funding, including that provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. They know the strategies that have been implemented that have had the most effect in improving pupils' progress, for example the structured reading programme. They also understand the rationale for widening pupils' experiences to raise their aspirations and develop their confidence.
- The academy trust provides effective professional development opportunities for staff, which is making a strong contribution towards improving teaching and learning at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make safeguarding a key priority in the school, ensuring that this appears on every staff meeting agenda, that staff training is kept up to date and is reflected on and that all staff know exactly what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Pupils' files reflect this rigour and demonstrate that leaders work with external agencies to pass on concerns and provide support when needed.
- Pupils spoken to said that they feel safe in school. They are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe, including when online.
- Leaders know the key issues affecting some pupils at the school and are proactive in

addressing these. For example, pupils learned about mental health and the importance of talking about feelings and issues. Pupils learn about making good choices to prepare them for dealing with issues such as alcohol and drug misuse.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning varies across classes and between subjects. Teaching in English and mathematics is overall more effective than in other subjects because this has been a key priority for the school and the focus of staff training. Nevertheless, even in English and mathematics, not all teaching is consistently good.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not consider carefully enough the effectiveness of how they group pupils. For example, in some classes where pupils work in pairs or groups, this helps develop learning through discussion. However, in other classes, teachers allow one pupil to dominate and others do not participate in the task so do not make progress in their learning.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high. For example, in some classes the teachers set out their expectations clearly for different groups of pupils and check work to ensure they meet these expectations. In others, teachers do not extend the most able pupils sufficiently or support those who have gaps in their learning to keep up with others.
- Some teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to revisit their learning. In mathematics, concepts taught in the spring term are not revisited in some classes, and so pupils do not retain their knowledge. Some pupils in Year 4, for example, were unable to recall their learning about fractions or explain what fractions are.
- Teachers recognise that many pupils in key stage 2 have gaps in their learning due to weak teaching previously. Some teachers are forensic in identifying these gaps and teaching appropriately. For example, in Year 3, close attention is paid to developing pupils' sentence structure and vocabulary. However, this is not the case in all classes. The gaps in knowledge and understanding, and in particular some pupils' weak skills in reading, impede the progress they make in learning across the curriculum.
- Teachers provide a broad curriculum for pupils, but teaching in subjects such as science and geography is sometimes not sufficiently well thought through in terms of what pupils will learn and how this learning builds on what pupils have learned previously. As a result, pupils do not remember what they are taught and so do not make strong progress.
- Some teachers lack understanding about how to support the increasing numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language at the school. They do not ensure that they make tasks accessible to pupils, and they sometimes give them tasks which are purposeless or leave them to join in a task they do not understand. Training for teachers in meeting the needs of these pupils is planned but has not yet been provided.
- Some teachers' subject knowledge is not sufficiently strong. For example, some teachers use incorrect vocabulary in mathematics or teach pupils misconceptions. By contrast, in some classes, teachers are explicitly clear with pupils about the vocabulary they are using and want pupils to retain.

- Teachers establish positive relationships with pupils and, in some classes, this is used to particularly good effect in motivating pupils to work hard and produce work of a good standard. For example, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 are very keen to please their teachers, and they respond to tasks with enthusiasm.
- Early reading is taught effectively, and, consequently, the proportion of pupils who are able to read to the expected standard by the end of Year 1 is rising. Teachers group pupils according to their knowledge and move pupils between groups to provide extra support or challenge when needed. Teachers promote a love of reading through daily story times and weekly visits to the newly developed library. This is enabling an increasing proportion of pupils to have access to the wider curriculum.
- Additional adults provide effective support for pupils. They support them sensitively, allowing them to develop increasing independence in their learning. Pupils with SEND receive effective support in class and through additional support in small groups and one-to-one with staff.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders identified that many pupils lacked confidence and resilience, which has hindered their progress. Pupils are now given regular opportunities to learn about the importance of these attributes, for example through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons and assemblies, and to develop them personally in lessons and through the wider curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 1 are taught karate so that they learn the importance of self-control and the difference between being assertive and aggressive.
- Pupils currently in the school are increasingly confident and prepared to 'have a go' at more challenging tasks. Pupils in Year 6, for example, talked with confidence about the challenge of standardised national tests (SATs) which they were undertaking during the inspection.
- Pupils are confident that staff will help them if they are worried or upset. Pupils spoken to could identify a trusted adult and were confident that problems or arguments would be taken seriously by staff. Pupils know right from wrong and understand, for example, that racism is wrong and should be challenged.
- Pupils know what bullying is. They said that it is rare in school and that leaders follow up all incidents of bullying rigorously.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have improved behaviour by implementing a structured system for sanctions and rewards which pupils know and respond to. For example, pupils during the inspection were pleased to show their raffle tickets for good attitudes and behaviour. Pupils spoken to said that they are pleased that behaviour is now much better than it

was previously.

- Pupils are developing increasingly positive attitudes towards learning, but where teaching is less effective, pupils sometimes lose interest and do not concentrate on their learning as much as they should. In some classes, teachers repeatedly remind pupils about noise levels and concentration.
- Attendance at the school has improved because pupils like coming to school. Leaders are rigorous in following up absences and the school's pastoral support worker works with parents to help them understand the importance of regular school attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2018, the proportion of pupils at the end of Year 6 who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics rose from the previous year. Despite this, a large proportion of pupils left the school with attainment below the standard expected for their age. Pupils currently in Year 6 have made good progress from their starting points because teaching in reading, writing and mathematics is effective. However, a significant proportion have gaps in their learning due to weak teaching previously and so remain below the expected standard.
- In Year 2 in 2018, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was low, with around half the cohort leaving key stage 1 with attainment below the expected standard. Pupils currently in Year 2, while making progress in reading, are not supported sufficiently well to enable them to acquire the skills and knowledge they need in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils in other year groups make variable progress. Where teaching is effective, such as in Year 1, pupils are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is not the case in all classes because some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils. In some classes, teachers do not identify and address gaps in learning and extend pupils' learning sufficiently over time.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2018 improved from the previous year and most pupils currently in Year 1 demonstrate appropriate reading skills for their age. Leaders are confident that improvements in reading in Year 1 will be sustained, and this is confirmed by inspection evidence.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils make variable progress. In some classes, for example in Year 4 science, pupils develop their knowledge and skills over time. In other classes, learning is piecemeal because a more coherent curriculum is still under development.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points because staff carefully plan for their needs in lessons and additional support is carefully planned, implemented and evaluated to ensure that it makes a difference for pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to, and sometimes better progress than, others in the school. In common with all pupils, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the standard expected of them is improving overall, but varies according to the quality of teaching they receive.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children in the early years are given an increasingly good start in developing their early reading skills. They are taught systematic phonics almost from the start and have books to practise their reading which match their phonics skills. This is having a positive impact in increasing the proportion of pupils who reach a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year.
- Staff in early years are enthusiastic and want to achieve the best for children. However, they are not supported well enough by leaders to develop their understanding of how to further improve provision and use assessment effectively. Plans are already in place in the trust to address this weakness and secure more effective leadership.
- Staff plan a wide range of tasks and activities that children enjoy and that are linked to the core texts which children are reading with the teacher. During the inspection, children happily used the language of their current book and played out the story together. However, adults do not intervene in children's play sufficiently to extend their learning and develop their communication skills.
- Staff understand the importance of helping parents to support their child's learning. They hold some meetings for parents and use online systems which parents can access to show what children have been learning. Despite this, leaders have not been able to overcome the reluctance of some parents to engage with the school to support learning at home.
- Staff record children's achievements and are confident that children achieve well from low starting points. However, staff do not have a clear enough understanding of what children should know and understand by the end of the Reception Year and do not have high enough expectations of some children.
- Children develop good social skills because adults provide good opportunities for children to play together and share resources. Staff remind children of what is expected of them in relation to behaviour and so children behave well.
- Children are safe and well cared for in the Reception class. They enjoy learning indoors and in the well-designed and attractive outside area. Adults know children well and carefully consider their well-being.
- The needs of children who are disadvantaged or with SEND are identified swiftly and addressed. For example, pupils with speech and language difficulties are well supported through speech therapy and additional support with communication.

School details

Unique reference number	142818
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10088632

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	190
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mike Tait
Headteacher	Sara Bush
Telephone number	01603742969
Website	www.valleyprimaryacademy.co.uk
Email address	office@valleyprimaryacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Heart Academy Trust in 2016 and the current headteacher was appointed in 2017. A board of trustees is responsible for governance of the school.
- The school is a smaller school than is found on average nationally.
- Pupils are in single-aged classes from Reception Year to Year 6.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background, with a higher number of other ethnic groups within the school than is found in primary schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than found nationally. The school is in the highest quintile for deprivation nationally and is part of the Norwich opportunity area.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND or who are supported by an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is similar to the

national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes, some with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books, school assessment information, leaders' evaluation of teaching and learning and a range of school documents.
- Inspectors spoke with a small number of parents, and met with some pupils from Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer and other employees of the trust, with senior leaders and staff.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during staff recruitment.

Inspection team

Maria Curry, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clare Fletcher

Ofsted Inspector

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