

Inspection of a good school: The Vale Primary School

84–92 Beaconsfield Road, Epsom, Surrey KT18 6HP

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2023

Outcome

The Vale Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this friendly and supportive school. They like the way they are greeted by teachers and how everyone says, 'Good morning.' Pupils describe how 'when you walk in, you feel welcome'. Expectations are high. These are set out in the school's values, which pupils strive to meet. This helps to ensure that behaviour is good. Any rare hint of bullying or unkindness is responded to quickly by staff. Pupils feel safe.

Pupils feel valued. They appreciate the way teachers make learning fun and that playground facilities are regularly updated. Pupils explain that this helps them feel that their needs are important and recognised. School council meetings, which are attended by governors, ensure that leaders seek out pupils' views.

Pupils are positive about the opportunities they have to contribute to the school community, for example by being a 'Vale Ambassador'. They know that it is important to be a good role model. Pupils are enthusiastic about the variety of clubs on offer, such as cooking, choir and calligraphy.

Parents like the family feel of the school. A parent summed up others' views by saying: 'The Vale is a caring school where every child is known and allowed to flourish.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have a relentless focus on improving the curriculum. They work closely with leaders from the multi-academy trust to ensure everyone has appropriate training and support to develop strong subject knowledge. This has helped to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils from Reception to Year 6. Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly and then support put in place so all pupils can access the full curriculum on offer. For example, in mathematics, pupils with SEND use a variety of strategies to access the curriculum successfully.

In mathematics, a new curriculum has been introduced in early years. This is working well, helping children learn the foundations of number. Pupils develop a secure knowledge in readiness for Year 1. As pupils move up through the school, they complete calculations confidently and accurately. This helps them to select the right strategies to solve more complex mathematical problems.

In some other subjects, the precise knowledge that pupils must learn is not yet consistently ordered. This prevents pupils from developing their knowledge securely. Leaders know this and are continuing to refine the curriculum. For example, the computing leader has developed a greater emphasis on building pupils' understanding of e-safety as part of the computing curriculum. Subject leaders are supporting teachers confidently to adapt plans where needed so that pupils build knowledge systematically across the whole curriculum.

Leaders ensure that learning to read is a top priority. They have adopted a systematic approach to teaching early reading. Right from the start of Reception, this programme is implemented effectively by well trained staff. Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly so that any pupils who start to fall behind are identified and given the help they need to keep up. Books that pupils read are tightly matched to the sounds they are learning. This helps pupils to apply their knowledge and experience success.

Reading has a high profile in classrooms. Pupils enjoy a wide range of books and authors. Reading areas in the school are well stocked and inviting. Children in Reception are enthralled by the stories teachers read to them. They are keen to contribute and join in with class discussions about the interesting characters they find out about and explore.

In classes, pupils behave well. They are keen and motivated to learn. Their discussions with each other are focused and productive. Pupils enjoy their learning. They have a thirst for knowledge. Pupils enjoy using the rich vocabulary that leaders have woven throughout the curriculum. This helps pupils to explain their thinking clearly and assists teachers in quickly spotting any misunderstandings any pupil might have.

Leaders have ensured that pupils' wider development is supported throughout the curriculum. Pupils learn about a range of religions and beliefs. The curriculum is enriched by visitors talking to pupils about fundamental British values, such as democracy. This helps ensure that pupils are ready for the next stages of their education and life beyond school.

Governors work closely with staff and the multi-academy trust. They know the school well. Staff are positive about working at the school. They describe leaders as approachable and appreciative. Staff feel that their workload is considered. They are supported well to focus on the tasks that have the most impact on pupils' learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff have regular training to help them quickly identify any concerns about pupils. Leaders work closely with other agencies where necessary to make sure pupils get the help they need to stay safe.

Any aspects of school life that need additional risk management are considered carefully. For example, the additional green space used by pupils is carefully supervised by staff. This ensures that pupils who use this space are kept safe, including when they move between spaces.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, some learning sequences within the foundation curriculum are not precise enough. When this happens, teaching sequences do not help pupils to systematically build knowledge as well as they could. Leaders should continue to refine the foundation curriculum so that all teaching sequences support pupils in building their knowledge and skills effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146024
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10257084
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lynne O'Reilly
Headteachers	Cathy Browne and Sarah Leyland
Website	www.thevaleprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act

Information about this school

- The school joined the GLF Schools Multi-Academy Trust in September 2019.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector met regularly with school leaders. The inspector also met with representatives from the board of trustees and the school standards board.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to pupils read.

- Safeguarding records were reviewed, including the single central record and appointment procedures. The inspector spoke to staff about safeguarding and spoke to pupils about the support they have in understanding how to keep safe.
- The inspector reviewed responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys.
- The inspector talked to staff to gather their views about the school, including their workload and well-being. The inspector met with several groups of pupils, as well as speaking to pupils during lessons and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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