



Valley Gardens Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108636
LEA North Tyneside
Inspection number 278015
Inspection dates 17 October 2005 to 18 October 2005
Reporting inspector Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Valley Gardens
School category	Community		Whitley Bay
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		Tyne and Wear, NE25 9AQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2008792
Number on roll	728	Fax number	0191 2008785
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr I Grayson
Date of previous inspection	27 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr M Homer

Age group 9 to 13	Inspection dates 17 October 2005 - 18 October 2005	Inspection number 278015
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Valley Gardens is a larger than average Middle School. Most pupils come from professional, affluent homes with parents who have high aspirations for their children. The school is oversubscribed. Most of the pupils are white British but there are a very few from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. The proportions entitled to free school meals or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are low compared to the national picture. Attendance is high and unauthorised absence very low. The attainment of the majority is above average on entry to Year 5 with a large proportion well above the expected level of attainment.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Valley Gardens is providing a satisfactory standard of education. This judgement does not reflect the school's own evaluation of its work which sees its effectiveness as good.

Standards are above the national average but the pupils' achievement is only satisfactory when compared to schools with equally able pupils. Teaching is satisfactory overall and is sometimes good. The school recognises the need to improve numeracy skills and to continue to build on recent improvements in pupils' writing. A good procedure for assessing pupils' progress has been recently introduced but is not yet consistently applied. Leadership and management are satisfactory but there is capacity for improvement. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The inspection found many strengths in the school. It caters extremely well for pupils' personal development and well-being and there is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and to the inclusion of all pupils in what the school has to offer. An extensive range of activities and visits extends pupils' understanding and enjoyment of the curriculum. The work the school does to raise awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles and to forge links with schools abroad is impressive. Pupils' attitudes are positive, they behave well and they are confident, articulate and courteous to each other and to adults. Attendance is above the national average and there is very little unauthorised absence. Only on very rare occasions is short-term exclusion used as a sanction. Pupils enjoy being at Valley Gardens and their parents are appreciative and supportive of what the staff are doing to educate their children. A small number of parents felt that they needed more information on the progress their children were making.

The school works well with outside agencies and partner institutions to promote pupils' welfare and learning. There have been satisfactory improvements since the last inspection but the school has been slow to respond to the key issue of risk assessments.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' levels of achievement by improving their numeracy skills and their ability to write well.
- Improve the rate of pupils' progress through the systematic and rigorous implementation of the school's new assessment procedures.
- Ensure that risk assessments are carried out.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The results of the 2004 national tests were above average when compared to all schools nationally. When comparison is made with schools with pupils of similar high ability, however, the results in English and mathematics place the school just within the middle range of attainment. The achievement of those pupils was therefore only satisfactory.

The school recognises the need to improve on this and is working effectively to raise levels of achievement. The priority has been to raise standards in English and improvements are evident in the current work in Years 6 and 8. There was also a marked increase in the number of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in that subject in the 2005 national tests. The school now has the improvement of numeracy skills as a priority, as well as building on the recent improvements in pupils' writing. Achievement in science was also satisfactory with results being above the national average but average compared to similar schools. The work seen during the inspection reflects the satisfactory test results. This is so for both boys and girls, for the small number of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and for those who have learning difficulties.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school judged the personal development and well-being of pupils as good. The inspection found them to be outstanding. The high attendance levels, the punctuality to lessons, the interest in and enjoyment of work, the exemplary behaviour and the respect they have for each other and their teachers, are all exceptional. Pupils particularly enjoy those lessons where they can participate actively in the work. Working relationships are extremely good and pupils have many opportunities to develop social skills through group work. They know right from wrong. They reflect on their actions and their relationships with others and they are questioning and curious about their community and the wider world. They contribute to the locality through charitable work and fund raising. The school has developed an international dimension to the curriculum which enhances pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils feel safe and secure and free from any form of intimidation or bullying and they appreciate how the school listens to their views and acts on them. They know how to be healthy, what to eat, and how to stay fit. They have the personal qualities to succeed in life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school judged teaching and learning to be good. The inspection found them to be satisfactory with some strong features. In the best lessons, the teachers' extensive subject knowledge and thorough planning enable pupils of all abilities to make good progress. The work is challenging and the pace of learning rapid. The lesson material is adapted to meet the learning needs of any small groups, such as those with learning difficulties. Such good practice is not universal in the school; at times teachers' expectations are not high enough and they do not make clear to pupils what they have to do to improve. In some subjects, such as English, geography and science, pupils are helped to understand how their work is assessed and they work towards specific learning targets. The marking and the feedback they get in lessons make clear how to address areas of weakness. As a result, they learn well and achieve highly. There are other subjects where this is not in place. The school has devised a good procedure for

monitoring and analysing pupils' progress and when this is fully in place it will enable teachers quickly to pick up and respond to any underachievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum. It is broad and balanced and provides opportunities for pupils to enjoy their work. There are additional opportunities for imaginative work in all years with provision for the creative arts. The work done this year on the teaching of literacy skills across the curriculum is raising standards. Health education is good, as is the provision made for citizenship. The wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits, including sport and the arts, provide very good opportunities for pupils to extend their enjoyment and understanding of the curriculum. Residential visits and adventurous activities provide particularly stimulating experiences. Clubs are well attended and the school enjoys success in many competitions and sporting activities. The curriculum has been reviewed to include provision for the teaching of computer technology but as yet the use of such technology is not fully in place in all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are satisfactory. The school judged these to be good but risk assessments are not yet complete. There is very good provision for pupils' welfare. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place and any concerns teachers raise regarding vulnerable children are dealt with quickly and effectively by senior staff. The support and guidance afforded to those pupils with learning difficulties is good and raises their confidence and self-esteem. Careers education and guidance have been identified by the school as areas for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's future direction and he is well supported by his senior colleagues. Their evaluation systems for deciding how effective the school is are satisfactory, although some of their judgements are overgenerous. Weaknesses have been identified in the school's procedures for monitoring pupils' performance and so a more robust tracking system is being implemented. They have responded to the views of some parents about the information they receive on pupils' progress and are improving reports. The school plans well for the future but there needs to be greater precision in the school development plan so that it can be used as a short, working document to guide and monitor improvements. Leaders have identified the raising of basic skills as a means of improving equality of opportunity for all pupils. They also know that there are some areas of middle management which are not implementing school policy consistently and they are responding with appropriate action.

The school is well staffed. There is an appropriate range of good quality resources to support pupils' learning and they are put to good use. Extensive building work is being undertaken which will greatly improve the learning environment for Year 5 pupils and for pupils throughout the school with learning difficulties. The governors know the school well; they fulfil their role as critical friends and play their part in shaping its future direction. They and the senior management team understand what needs to be done to improve and how to go about it. This is evident from the action taken to raise standards in English. There is therefore the capacity to secure further improvements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 0207 421 6800
F 0207 421 6707
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Valley Gardens Middle School
Valley Gardens
Whitley Bay
Tyne and Wear
NE25 9AQ

19 October 2005

Dear Pupils

You know that we recently came to inspect your school and we would like to tell you what we found. First we want to thank you for talking to us and for making us feel welcome. We enjoyed being in your school and were impressed by how hard you are working.

We found that you are making satisfactory progress in your work and that your school does many things well.

You have outstanding personal qualities which will enable you to succeed in life.

Your attitude to work and the respect you have for each other and for the adults who work in your school are very good indeed.

Your behaviour is excellent.

You enjoy all that Valley Gardens has to offer, especially the clubs, activities and trips.

You are well cared for, feel safe from any form of intimidation or bullying, and you know how important it is to do things which make you healthy.

Your teachers and the inspectors found three things to work on to make your education even better.

You and your teachers need to work to improve your numeracy skills and your ability to write well.

Your teachers need to monitor the progress you are making and take action quickly if you are not achieving as well as you should.

Assessments need to be completed on all the rooms and areas you use to check if there are any risks to the health and safety of you and the staff.

We would like to wish you and your school every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower Lead Inspector

Annex B