

Valley Road School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123041
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	292567
Inspection date	29 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Marianne Harris

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tim Haigh
Headteacher	Mrs Val Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003
School address	Valley Road Henley-on-Thames RG9 1RR
Telephone number	01491 573784
Fax number	01491 637776

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average size school in a socially advantaged area. The majority of pupils come from a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is similar to that usually seen. The school has gained the Activemark Gold for their sporting provision and Silver Artsmark for creative activities in the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils of all abilities make good progress and reach standards that are above average. Parents are very supportive of the school and many appreciate the good teaching and welcoming atmosphere.

The school places much emphasis on pupils' personal development and strives to ensure that all pupils make good progress both academically and personally. Consequently, their personal development is excellent. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. They make a significant contribution to the local area by taking part in the youth council and raising much-needed funds for various charities. Pupils of all ages get along together very well and their behaviour is excellent.

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress from an average starting point because provision for them is good. By the end of Years 2 and 6 standards in national tests are above average with more pupils reaching the higher levels than is normally seen. All pupils make good progress and achieve well whatever their ability. The school's excellent curriculum makes a significant contribution to the good progress that pupils make. There are very many opportunities for pupils to take part in a wide variety of activities both in and out of lessons. Pupils are very enthusiastic about these and justly proud of their achievements.

Pupils really enjoy coming to school because teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and work is based on what each child already knows and understands. Lessons move at a good pace and teaching assistants are used well to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. There are, however, times when these teaching assistants do not have a clear role and sit listening to the teacher instead of playing an active part in the lesson.

The school takes good care of the pupils. Systems to ensure that they are safe are well established and pupils report that they feel secure. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well so that they can make good progress. Teachers set targets for individuals and most pupils know what their targets are. In some classes these are reviewed regularly, but in some there is no clear system for reviewing them and pupils are not sure what they have to do to reach higher standards.

Leadership and management are good. There has been much success in tackling the issues from the last inspection and in maintaining standards across the school. The system for tracking how much progress each pupil is making is effective and any pupil who is not making the expected progress receives extra support. Governors are good, support the school well and contribute to the school's good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Put in place systems to review each pupil's targets so that they know what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Make better use of teaching assistants during whole class teaching time.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children join the school they have abilities that are similar to those usually found. They make good progress during their time in the Foundation Stage and most reach the goals

expected for children of their age, and some exceed these, especially in their personal development where standards are above average. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above average, although the numbers of pupils who reached the higher levels in mathematics in the assessments in 2006 were lower than normally seen. Indications are that this number has risen, so standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. By the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are consistently above average and tracking information shows that all pupils make good progress from their starting points at the end of Year 2. More than the usual number of pupils reach the higher levels in national tests and the school's own tracking data indicates that these standards will be reflected in the national tests that have been taken this year. All pupils achieve well, whatever their ability, and many pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities reach the nationally expected standards for their age. Pupils achieve particularly well in art, music and information and communication technology (ICT) in which standards are above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including all aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, is excellent. Pupils are very confident, friendly and polite. They have a mature attitude to learning and really enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their attendance, which is above average, and the fact that most pupils arrive at school on time. Children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress in their personal development. They learn to get along together and settle quickly into school routines. In discussions with groups of pupils they speak very highly of the school and can think of nothing they would change. They particularly like the way they all play together and remark that the 'Buddy Stop' in the playground is not used because if anyone is lonely in the playground they soon find someone to play with. The school council is very proud of all the fund raising they do for local as well as national charities. The members of the youth council say that 'we feel part of the community because we meet with other schools and discuss issues that affect the local area'. Pupils all understand about keeping healthy and staying active and many are very positive about the sporting activities that they are offered in school. They learn about the issues they will face as they grow up. Pupils are very well prepared with the basic skills they will need for the next stage of their education and they have a very good understanding about what it means to be a good citizen.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils achieving well and there are very good relationships throughout the school. Pupils report that learning is interesting because they carry out a lot of investigations in mathematics and science and this gives them the opportunity to find out for themselves. Teachers explain the purpose of each lesson carefully so that pupils know what they are going to learn and teachers check that pupils understand the activities and tasks. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported during activities so that they can make good progress, although there are times when teaching assistants are not active. During some parts of lessons teaching assistants often have no clearly defined role and they are not used well to support learning in the class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an excellent curriculum. Many of the pupils and parents appreciate the very wide range of activities that are offered. Pupils are proud of their sporting achievements, including their trophies won in local competitions, and of their music and art work, which is of a very high standard. There are many opportunities for all pupils to join in specialised weeks that offer pupils the chance to explore their design and technology skills. Pupils who took part in the local initiative for designing, making and then racing their models talk excitedly about their experiences. The school grounds provide a stimulating learning environment and this is used well to enrich learning in science, for example. Pupils talk of the many visitors to the school that help them and they are very interested in learning about many different cultures and traditions. The very good programme for personal, social and health education results in pupils knowing how to keep safe and deal with any issues they may face. Most excitement is generated by the residential trip and pupils really look forward to feeling very grown up when they are away from home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for all pupils. The school is safe and welcoming. Child protection procedures are robust. Many staff are qualified in first aid and pupils report that they know who to go to if they have a problem. Teachers set targets for pupils so that they know what they are working towards in order to reach higher standards in English and mathematics. Many pupils know what their targets are, but there is no consistent procedure to review these targets. Consequently, pupils are not always sure when they have been achieved or what they need to aim for next. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have good support and make good progress during their time in school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Effective tracking systems are in place and the information gathered from assessments are used to set targets for each individual child. However, there have been no clear procedures set for reviewing these targets. Subject leaders are knowledgeable and have a clear idea of what needs to be done to improve their subjects. All levels of leadership contribute to the school's accurate self-evaluation. Governors are frequent visitors to the school and have played a major part in the recent building work that has been carried out to enlarge classrooms. There has been much improvement since the last inspection and all issues have been tackled effectively. Standards in ICT have risen and governors have taken a very active role in improving provision in this subject.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Valley Road School, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1RR

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school. You were very helpful in telling me all about your work and I enjoyed my visit. I am now writing to let you know what I found out.

You were very excited about learning and I agree with you that yours is a good school. You work hard and make good progress. I was especially pleased to hear about how you get along so well together and that your 'Buddy Stop' is no longer needed because no-one is lonely in your playground. I thought that you were all friendly, polite and very well behaved. I really enjoyed hearing about the work of the school council and that of the youth council. You told me about the extra activities that are offered to you and I was very impressed by the huge range, especially the sporting activities. I was quite worn out just thinking about them!

Some of you told me about your targets and I saw some in your books. This is a very good idea because it means you know what you are aiming for. I have asked your teachers to make sure that these targets are reviewed regularly so that you know what else you need to do to improve your work.

I think that learning is interesting in your school because many of you told me about the investigations you do in mathematics and science. Your teachers work hard and I have asked them to look at the way teaching assistants are used during introductions and discussions because sometimes they have little to do. I am asking you to help your teachers by thinking about your targets and letting the adults in your class know how well you think you are doing.

Thank you once again for being so helpful. I wish you good luck in the future.

Marianne Harris Lead Inspector