

Valentine Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132025
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	293920
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	David Marshall

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr N Coffin
Headteacher	Mrs D Hobbs
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001
School address	Valentine Avenue Sholing Southampton SO19 0EQ
Telephone number	023 80448944
Fax number	023 80443498

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Valentine is an above average size infant school. Around 80% of pupils come from Local Authority Housing including flats, and the rest from private housing. The percentage eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is also above average. A large proportion of pupils come from out of the catchment area, many from designated areas of deprivation. A below average number of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Valentine school provides an outstanding education for all of its pupils. The headteacher, deputy head and governors provide highly effective leadership. They know the school's strengths very well and what needs to be refined further. The school's view of itself is accurate and their track record of raising standards and effective leadership show that it has an excellent capacity to continue improving. There are excellent partnerships with the community and with other schools and organisations. Parents think highly of the school and what it offers their children. One spoke on behalf of many when she wrote, 'The school has changed dramatically (since it opened) and it is a bright, friendly happy place for the children to learn. I am amazed at how much and how quickly my children have learnt'.

Throughout the school, pupils achieve extremely well. Children enter the school with skills and understanding that are well below those expected for their age. By the time they leave standards are above average because the teaching and curriculum are excellent. The school data shows that their focus in the last year on mathematics, and on increasing the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in all subjects, has been very successful.

There is outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage, where teachers plan stimulating and challenging activities for the children. Their use of 'MOOT' - Managing our Own Time - gives the children a real sense of determining their own way forward and guarantees their full involvement in all activities. The use of the outstanding, large, outdoor areas is exemplary and enables children to thoroughly enjoy all their days in school and provides them with an excellent start to their education. Throughout the rest of the school, teaching and learning are often outstanding. Lessons are very well planned, making sure that all pupils enjoy learning. The information collected about pupils is used particularly well to ensure that the least able and most vulnerable pupils make very good progress. This is achieved by providing excellent support from the outstanding teaching assistants wherever it is needed.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The atmosphere for learning created by the whole staff is supportive and caring. Staff are vigilant to pupils' needs, enabling them all to learn and play in a safe and secure learning environment. Thanks to the school's excellent systems, pupils' attendance rates have improved significantly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils show very caring attitudes to each other and the environment. They learn to respect children from different cultures and have an excellent understanding of healthy living and keeping safe.

The rich curriculum covers all subjects very well and is enhanced by a very good range of outdoor activities. Although opportunities for individual pupils to shine are plentiful, the school is continuing to refine the curriculum in order to ensure it continues to be as exciting as they can make it. They are currently adapting much of their approach to linking individual subjects in order to make learning as creative as possible. In so doing they are planning to make sure that pupils are clear about how successful they have been in each lesson.

What the school should do to improve further

Although there are no major issues for improvement, the inspectors agree with the school that it should:

- after further refinement of the curriculum, make sure that teachers' lesson planning includes opportunities for pupils to evaluate and understand their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

When children start school their standards are generally well below those expected for their age, especially in social and language development. By the time they enter Year 1, they have made excellent progress and achieved very well. However, standards are still below those expected for children of their age. Progress is especially good in personal development as children learn to get along very well together and develop a thirst for learning. National assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 show that standards are generally above average. This year, the number of pupils who reached the higher levels in writing, reading and mathematics is also above the national average. All pupils, whatever their ability, achieve outstandingly well. The provision for those pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is exceptional, and as a result they make excellent progress. The provision of such items as a sensory room means all their needs are painstakingly met. One parent wrote enthusiastically about her daughter, who is assessed as highly able, saying, 'I have no doubt that due to the excellent teaching and assessment at Valentine she will reach her potential.'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils are very happy and thoroughly enjoy the wealth of learning activities provided. Relationships are excellent because adults provide outstanding support. This contributes very positively to the pupils' excellent attitudes to learning, which prepare them well for the future. They behave extremely well and, as one pupil said, 'We make the school a special place.' Pupils say that they feel safe and know who to tell if they are unhappy. They enjoy exercise and sport and understand the importance of healthy eating. There are many opportunities for regular exercise in physical education lessons and in the spacious outdoor areas and using the good play equipment. The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Through the school council pupils make a valuable contribution to school life and are proud of the changes they have been able to influence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching is outstanding and this ensures that all pupils make excellent progress. Teachers assess pupils' progress exceptionally well and make very good use of this information when planning future work. This helps them to ensure that lessons are pitched at the right levels and that all pupils can succeed. Tasks engage pupils' interest and motivate them to learn. Relationships are strong and pupils work productively as a result. The support staff make a strong contribution to this high quality of learning, whether working with individuals or small groups. They form excellent relationships, keep pupils on task and, in particular, help pupils who have concentration difficulties. In lessons, expectations are high, the pace is brisk and pupils know what they are expected to learn. An excellent Year 2 mathematics lesson was typical of the well-structured activities. The well understood challenge on reflective symmetry, the 'hands on experience' and the very effective use of information and communication technology

(ICT) to focus on butterflies' wings, enabled pupils to apply appropriate, and different, styles of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and covers a very wide range of learning activities and experiences. It is planned very well to meet the pupils' needs and offers them opportunities to make choices and decisions with confidence and flexibility. The Foundation Stage benefits from a stimulating environment. Both indoor and outdoor activities promote all aspects of their learning exceptionally well. Excellent attention is paid to developing basic skills and making the curriculum more creative and enjoyable through well-planned links between subjects. The school is successfully working towards a creative, '21st century', curriculum and teachers are refining their planning further to consistently raise pupils' awareness of their successes in learning. Pupils enjoy, and parents value, the excellent range of well-attended lunchtime and after school activities such as football, dance, art and recorders. The good number of educational visits and visitors further enliven the pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are excellent. The school has very thorough procedures in place for safeguarding pupils. One parent summed up the views of many others by writing; 'The help and understanding the school has given to my child has been excellent'. The school provides excellent support for vulnerable pupils, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and the very few learning English as a new language. Academic guidance is excellent. The progress of pupils is tracked closely using efficient ICT based systems. Pupils are set challenging learning targets and there are very good systems to check their on-going progress towards these. Staff deal well with any bullying that arises in a very caring and professional manner. Pupils say that they are safe in school, and know who to go to if in need of help.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's leadership is exceptional in creating exciting and enjoyable learning environments. Indoor and outdoor resources are of the highest quality and exceptional displays of pupils' work create a positive learning environment. The school knows itself very well. All staff are clear about the school's strengths and areas for development because of rigorous self-evaluation. Priorities are sharply focused and staff are held to account in meeting challenging targets. Data analysis, high quality monitoring of pupils' work and lesson observations also provide staff with evidence of where support is needed.

Teamwork is an aspect stressed by all in the school and everyone plays a valuable part in moving the school forward. The administrative team and site manager are considerable assets to the school and are very much appreciated by all concerned. Governors hold the school to account very well. There are very good systems in place to ensure they monitor the school's performance. They have successfully promoted the school and continually seek the views of pupils and

parents. The school's track record of improvement since its last inspection shows that it has excellent capacity to continue improving provision and to raise standards further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

28 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Valentine Infant School, Southampton, SO19 0EQ

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school. We enjoyed our time with you and would now like to tell you what we found out about your school. We agree with what many of you told us - Valentine is an excellent school.

We think you all do very well and really try hard at all times. You are especially lucky to have so many different activities, both during and after school. We also saw how keen you are to take part and how well you behave. Many of you told us how much you enjoy being at school, and how proud you are of what you can do. We are sure that you will continue to try hard so your school can be the fun place that you like, and where you can all learn.

Your teachers are always trying to help you do even better in lessons. We have asked them to make sure that, as they carry on making things even better, you are all able to understand how well you have done in every lesson. You must continue to listen carefully and take note of what they say. Then you will all continue to make really good progress in your learning.

Finally, we would like to thank you once again for all your help. We wish you well in the future.

With kind regards

David Marshall

Lead inspector