

Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101602
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	307753
Inspection date	10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	420
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Baker
Headteacher	Mrs S Head
Date of previous school inspection	8 September 2003
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Beckenham Lane Bromley BR2 0DA
Telephone number	020 8460 1121
Fax number	020 8466 8124

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues.

- What are leaders doing to further raise standards in mathematics?
- How good are the learning opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- Why do pupils do so well in English and science?

The inspectors gained evidence from lessons and from the school's own evaluations of its work. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and two governors. A range of documentation was evaluated. Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised and the views of parents were gathered from questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Valley Primary School is a very large primary school situated in a culturally, socially and ethnically mixed community. Two thirds of all pupils come from White British backgrounds. The rest of the school is made up of pupils from many other ethnic groups. Larger groups include pupils from other White backgrounds and those from Asian, Black Caribbean and Black African heritages. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has risen recently and is now higher than average. In total, 36 different home languages are spoken by the pupils. The school has a lower than average proportion of pupils who receive free school meals. A smaller than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although this tends to be closer to average between Years 3 and 6.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is made up of children in the Reception classes only, as the school does not have a Nursery. The school has a privately run pre-school on the same site, and an independent company manages the breakfast and after-school clubs.

The school has gained many awards. These include the Healthy School, Activemark Gold, Artsmark Gold and Investors in People awards. The school has also gained the Department for Children, Schools and Families award for effective financial management. Further awards relate to promoting pupils' basic skills and to information and communication technology (ICT).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Valley Primary is a very popular, oversubscribed and welcoming school that provides an outstanding education for its pupils. Leaders at all levels have very high expectations and work very well together as a team. Almost all parents have great confidence in the school. The views of one parent sum up the comments of others very well when noting, 'It is a fantastic school, my children have flourished here.'

The headteacher and her deputy have given almost 20 years of dedicated commitment to the school and its pupils. Their efforts are to be congratulated because pupils emerge from this school as confident, self-assured young people who are very well prepared for their future lives. Their personal development is outstanding. Governors and middle managers make an excellent contribution to leadership. As one governor commented, 'We are always focused on the children to make the school better for them.' Being part of a highly successful school, staff regularly share their talents and skills with other schools.

Outstanding teaching and learning opportunities enable pupils to make exceptionally good overall progress as they move through the school. Pupils' achievement is outstanding. The headteacher and all staff want all groups of learners to excel. They make sure that pupils know what they have to do to improve their work, and in return pupils work hard. The high-quality guidance and support given by teachers and assistants help pupils to thrive. Pupils noted that they like their teachers as they are 'nice, and care about you'. The very strong links between subjects make learning meaningful and fun for pupils; as a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy school life. Pupils rise to their teachers' high expectations of them. As one pupil put it, 'Challenges are hard, but not too hard that you give up.' Lessons are very well planned, and staff keenly develop their professional skills and knowledge.

Children's skills, when starting the school, are very wide ranging. However, overall, they are often lower than expected, especially for boys. From this starting point, pupils reach higher than average standards by the end of Year 2. They continue to do well between Years 3 and 6 and, as a result, by the end of Year 6 standards are exceptionally high in English, and very close to this in science. Pupils have very good ICT skills. Pupils achieve outstandingly well in English and science due to highly effective teaching of basic skills, the many practical activities, and the superb emphasis on discussion work. Lessons are very well planned, enabling pupils to learn in different ways and to develop their individual ideas.

By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in mathematics, and the school is successfully working to make them even higher next year. This improvement is aided by challenging target setting, interesting problem-solving activities, and highly effective assessments, which help pupils know what they need to do to improve.

Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds do equally well and, in particular, pupils who speak English as an additional language perform at an exceptionally high level. The rigorous focus on promoting speaking and listening skills benefits all pupils. The use of visual resources, role play and drama, when combined with the excellent relationships, give pupils considerable confidence to share and express their ideas.

Pupils with learning difficulties are very well supported overall, and they also often make excellent progress. These pupils frequently reach at least average levels in national tests. A few parents feel that provision for their children could be better. The school is working hard to address their worries and to ensure effective inclusion for all pupils. The school has installed a

lift to aid disabled access well. The school has a very small nurture room, for group work and where pupils can calm down if they have behaviour difficulties or need to talk about their worries. The space in this room, and in some classrooms, is extremely cramped, and is not always ideally suited to pupils' specific needs. Leaders recognise this, and are looking forward to finding out whether they have been successful in their recent bid to gain additional funds to provide more space for nurture work.

A few parents noted that some pupils do not always behave as well as they should. Inspectors agree with the school that almost all pupils behave very well. However, a few pupils do have complex behaviour difficulties and sometimes find it difficult to conform. This is why behaviour is judged to be good rather than outstanding.

Pupils enjoy learning new hobbies, such as gardening, and the magnificent grounds help with this. Very high-quality assemblies, special productions and community activities help pupils to develop a very good understanding of different religious beliefs and cultures. Pupils say that they can make friends here because the school is a happy place. The superb range of visits, which include three residential trips, helps pupils to learn about the world in which they live. Music work is very high quality. During the inspection, the orchestra performed a selection of Christmas carols to a very high standard. Pupils commented that they would like to have a rock band and learn the electric guitar as well! Pupils learn French in Years 2 to 6 and German in Year 6. The school has developed close links with a school in Malawi and another in Toulouse. Pupils greatly value having a 'sports pod' with an all-weather games pitch. This is used very successfully to unite the community on sports matches, and helps pupils to adopt fit and healthy lifestyles.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The EYFS is outstanding overall and very well led. In the last year, in particular, standards have risen, lifting achievement from good to outstanding. As a result, children are now joining Year 1 with higher than expected skills in almost all areas of their development. Until 2008, children joined Year 1 with average skills overall.

Relationships are excellent. Adults treat children as individuals, and they settle into school life quickly and happily. Staff encourage children so that they gain self-confidence and learn how to concentrate well. Relationships with parents and carers are excellent. The welfare provision is very impressive. For example, eight staff have the paediatric first-aid qualification. Most children quickly learn how to play successfully with others, and most behave very well; overall, children's personal development is good. Leaders are working to make this outstanding in the future, in particular by embedding a recent project to widen outside learning. Children have good access to outside learning activities, but leaders are awaiting the arrival of an awning so that children can go outside in all weathers. Children enjoy choosing activities and are engrossed in what they do. They work well in groups with an adult, and they thoroughly enjoy learning, as activities are fun. There is a very good focus on discussion activities. For example, they talked excitedly about making gingerbread men and could explain why $2 + 6 = 8$. Children precisely measured and cut wrapping paper for gifts. Physical development is very well promoted. Children enjoy many creative activities, especially dressing up and pretending to be in 'Santa's Grotto'. There are plenty of opportunities for children to explore their senses. Early reading and writing skills are very well promoted overall, and are supported by effective teaching of letters and sounds (phonics). Teachers plan a very good range of activities so that children can learn in different ways.

What the school should do to improve further

- Pursue the plans to provide additional space for group and nurture activities.

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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

05 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Valley Primary School, Bromley, BR2 0DA

You may remember that two inspectors came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

You go to an outstanding school. This means that many things are exactly right for you. Your headteacher and all of the other adults are working very hard to make the school as special as possible. Your teachers give you many exciting activities which make learning fun, and you work hard. We especially like the way that you are encouraged to talk about your ideas in lessons, and are very impressed by your progress in English and science. You are doing more mathematical problem solving, which is great because it really makes you think hard. Well done for working on your targets and for behaving well. You show very good respect for others and are developing fit and healthy lifestyles. Keep up all of those sports in your excellent 'sports pod'. You clearly enjoy coming to school and you value the many clubs, activities and visits. How wonderful to have so many residential trips! We are delighted to find out that you are learning French and German. We are especially impressed by the way that you try to help others. Try to keep up your links with the school in Malawi and your fundraising for it. Your excellent music work benefits the whole community. The adults care for you very well and help you to learn many important skills for the future. To make the school even better for you, we would like the adults to continue with their many useful plans. In particular, we have asked them to:

- see if they can find a way to make more space for special group and individual activities.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector