

# Valewood Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104890
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sefton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308698
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Heap

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Beaumont
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Debby Rigby
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Sherwood Avenue Crosby Liverpool Merseyside L23 7YG
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 9240483
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 9240483

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: whether results at the end of Key Stage 1 are high enough; the progress being made by higher attaining pupils in mathematics and other groups in the school; and the strategies to modify the curriculum to meet the learning needs of the various groups in the school. The inspector gathered evidence from: school documentation; interviews with pupils, parents, staff and governors; observing lessons and other activities; and analysing parents' questionnaires and comments. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average-sized primary school serves a mainly White British population with only a small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small number of pupils are learning English as an additional language and a few are in the care of the local authority. The area has average levels of social and economic disadvantage and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Children's skills on entry to the Foundation Stage (Reception) are below expected levels, particularly in communication and social skills. There have been significant changes to the teaching staff recently. Extended provision is available at the start and end of the day and this is reported on elsewhere. The school has successfully achieved the following awards: Healthy school; Artsmark Gold; and Activemark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This outstanding school provides excellent value for money. This judgement confirms the school's exemplary self-evaluation and is a clear indication of the way the school has continued to develop very strongly since the highly impressive previous inspection. Consequently, the school is exceptionally well placed to maintain these high levels of performance. Its reputation in the community is justifiably high, because of the exceptional way pupils' academic and personal development is nurtured. One parent of a Year 6 pupil expressed the views of many, 'I am, and have been, very impressed and pleased with the teaching and ethos of Valewood.'

Achievement and standards are outstanding. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 progress well and standards at the end of Year 2 have been a little above average. Nevertheless, there has been a downward trend in recent years, which matches the lower than expected standards identified as children enter Reception. In Year 2 national tests, the best results recently have been in writing because of the good improvement in writing skills since the previous inspection. Results in Year 6 national tests have been consistently and significantly above average since 2004. National data shows that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress from Years 2 to 6. Gains in knowledge, skills and understanding have been so impressive that the school was ranked in the top 3% of schools nationally in 2005 and 2006. Early indications are that standards remained high in 2007, particularly in English and science. However, the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher than average Level 5 in mathematics was much lower than the other subjects and this is mainly due to a relative lack of challenge for the most able pupils. Across the school, there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Most of the pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, those learning English as an additional language and the ones in the care of the local authority are making strong progress since recently starting school. All of this means that pupils are superbly prepared for their future education and life.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Their enjoyment of school and learning are obvious and this is much appreciated by many parents. One parent's views are indicative of many, 'Although our child has only been in school a short while we are very impressed and our child is very happy.' Attendance is average but is improving. Moral and social development are particular strengths and lead to the very good behaviour and exemplary attitudes to learning and the school itself. Pupils' high levels of confidence and very strong spiritual development are fostered by the school's excellent emphasis on the performing arts and in the way that opportunities for role-play are provided across the school. Pupils say that the school is a safe and secure place and they play their full part in maintaining this, during playtimes and as they move around the school. Other ways that pupils make an exemplary contribution include the practical deliberations of the school council and the way that older pupils make the youngsters welcome. Pupils have an exceptionally clear view of what leading a healthy lifestyle is all about and they appreciate the efforts of the kitchen staff in promoting this also. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of the diverse nature of Britain through a wide range of activities in the curriculum, including excellent links with a school in Bolton that has significant numbers of minority ethnic pupils.

Pupils make excellent academic and personal progress because the quality of teaching is good and the curriculum, care and guidance are excellent. Across the school, typical features of teaching and learning include teacher's good subject knowledge and their effective use of a wide range of resources to foster enthusiasm, interest and motivation in pupils. Effective

classroom and pupil management promotes and maintains exemplary attitudes to work and thoughtful behaviour. Good, detailed planning ensures that pupils' individual needs are mostly met well. Elements of outstanding teaching are clear in the performing arts and in much of the English and science work, where tasks are very stimulating and engage pupils' interest. As a result, pupils make the most progress in these areas. Nevertheless, the match of work to pupils' needs is less precise in mathematics and, as a consequence, some of the most able pupils do not do as well as they could. Sometimes their work is not challenging enough and inconsistencies in marking mean that there is not a clear enough focus on how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve further. This has much to do with the fact that there have been recent changes to staffing and that some teachers are coming to terms with new procedures and practices. Pupils' additional learning needs are identified well from Reception onwards and, where appropriate, targeted support and guidance are available.

The curriculum provides a rich and interesting programme with an innovative and successful approach to meeting pupils' differing needs in the 'STAR base'. Planning is thorough and provides all pupils with an exemplary range of activities, including excellent provision for Spanish. Pupils acquire new skills and develop a wider understanding of the world beyond the classroom through an extremely varied range of popular out of school activities, such as sports, music and drama. Moreover, there is a packed range of visits and visitors, including the popular residential visit. Excellent links with other schools and outside agencies have a very positive impact on pupils' learning, their attitudes to wider society and within the local community. Opportunities to use and develop basic skills in other subjects are particularly strong in English and information and communication technology. This was seen to really good effect in the research and writing about the Second World War.

Safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements and procedures for protecting pupils are robust. Training is up to date and staff know what to do in an emergency. Pupils are confident they can turn to an adult, or other pupil, for help in any situation. Pupils' confidence is high because any very rare instances of inappropriate behaviour are strongly and efficiently dealt with. The monitoring of behaviour, attendance and academic achievement is very good and challenging. Staff know the pupils really well and attendance rates are rising. Risks are dealt with very well because of the rigorous procedures and monitoring. Highly challenging targets are set through the effective tracking of academic progress. Nevertheless, better use could be made of the tracking information to set individual learning targets, particularly for the more able in mathematics.

Excellent outcomes for the pupils and first-rate provision are the result of high quality leadership and management. The headteacher has a clear vision for the academic and personal development of pupils. She rightly judges that parents ought to be a full partner in this and they appreciate the openness and accessibility they are afforded. In all of this work she is very well supported by key staff. Improvement planning is good, with aspirational targets and a clear evaluation and review method. Governors are very supportive, highly committed and monitor the school well. As a result, they have an accurate view of the school's work.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Good provision in the Foundation Stage means that children make good progress from standards that are a little below expected levels, particularly in communication, language and literacy. By the time they enter Year 1, standards are broadly typical for their age. Parents are happy with the Foundation Stage and one wrote that it is providing her child 'with a thirst for learning

which will hopefully stay with them throughout their life.' There is a strong emphasis on developing resilient basic skills, such as what to look for in a storybook and the sounds that letters make. All areas, both inside and outside, stimulate learning and collaborative working with particular importance attached to the effective role-play area. Good teaching is characterised by good management, appropriate questioning and lots of opportunities for children to make a contribution. The interactive whiteboard is used well and the children were delighted to see the animated 'Hungry Caterpillar' munching through some unlikely food!

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the number of pupils reaching the above average Level 5 in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Sharpen the use and consistency of marking, so that there is greater challenge for the more able pupils in mathematics.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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 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?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 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	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**

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in your excellent school last week. I am most grateful for your warm welcome, courtesy and the help you provided.

What I really liked about your school:

- the caring and happy atmosphere in school and the way you support each other - particularly the older pupils helping the youngsters
- the good teaching and strong teamwork of all the adults puts your needs first
- your excellent progress, particularly in English, science and performing arts
- the excellence of your attitudes to work, very good behaviour and the contribution you make as a school council
- how you all contribute to a safe and caring ethos in the school and the way that is appreciated by your parents
- the outstanding and interesting range of activities which enrich your curriculum, including the links which take you to Bolton
- the excellent leadership and management that ensures that the school continues to make really good progress.

To improve your school even more, I have asked your teachers to make sure that more Year 6 pupils achieve the Level 5 in the national tests in mathematics. I have pointed out to staff that their marking of your mathematics work needs to be more consistent and challenging. You can be a great help by always doing your best work, whether it is in mathematics or when using your mathematical skills, in other subjects.

Good luck for the future.