

Vigo Village School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118487
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312961
Inspection dates	13–14 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judy Yallop
Headteacher	Roger Barber
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2003
School address	Erskine Road Vigo Village Meopham Gravesend DA13 0RL
Telephone number	01732 823144
Fax number	01732 823144

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The number of pupils in this small school has fallen since the last inspection, but increasing numbers are now joining the Reception Year. Almost all of the pupils are White British, with just over 5% coming from Gypsy/Roma backgrounds. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties, most of which are minor. There is extended provision for pupils both before and after school. The headteacher was appointed in November 2006, following a short period as acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Though the number of pupils on roll has fallen, this is certainly not due to any parental concerns over the school. Quite the contrary; parents express particular appreciation for what they describe as 'a very friendly, caring, family-oriented school'. They are especially appreciative of the good care and welfare arrangements which follow from staff knowing the pupils well. As a parent put it, 'The children benefit from the sense of community in the school, being known and listened to, and the sense of working together.' In turn, pupils treat each other with politeness and respect. They enjoy coming to school and, from the start of the Reception Year and as they progress through to Year 6, they grow steadily in confidence and self-esteem.

The school's exciting curriculum is a major factor in keeping pupils interested and engaged. French and German enrich an already broad curriculum. Subjects are brought together well, so that skills are given a practical application. The recent 'birdwatching day', for example, excited pupils' interest because it imaginatively combined aspects of science, the environment, art and mathematics, with pupils of all ages coming together as part of a Royal Society for the Protection of Birds project. They clearly learnt a lot from the experience.

Academically, most pupils attain the nationally expected standards. Achievement is satisfactory rather than better, however, because relatively few pupils attain the higher levels in the Year 2 assessments and Year 6 national tests. This is because teachers do not always match work closely enough to the pupils' different capabilities. Pupils who need extra help are often well supported by teaching assistants. This frequently enables them to make good progress in lessons. It is the more able pupils who make less progress than they could because they are not always set challenging enough work, although this picture is improving, particularly in mathematics. Relationships in lessons are good and activities are varied, which helps to keep pupils well motivated and involved. Teachers give pupils a very clear explanation at the start of lessons of what it is they will be doing. They do not, however, give pupils a clear enough picture of what it is they are expected to learn. This limits opportunities for pupils to evaluate for themselves the progress they are making in their learning. Marking mostly gives pupils good encouragement but it does not always help pupils enough by identifying the next steps that they need to focus on to extend their learning.

School leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and of those areas which could be better. The headteacher's monitoring of lessons and of pupils' work is thorough, with a sharp focus that provides staff with very clear feedback that is helping to drive school improvement. Other members of the leadership team have their own clear responsibilities but not all have had regular involvement in the monitoring process.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year. Parents are very pleased with the way their children are helped to settle when they start school. As one put it, 'The move from pre-school into Reception was wonderful: the staff were warm, caring and approachable.' Staff organise a good mix of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities in the Foundation Stage, and children take responsibility for recording the activities they choose by popping their photograph into a pocket showing each of the choices available to them. From a starting point

that is broadly in line with the skills and experience expected nationally for children of this age, they make good progress to reach above average standards by the end of the year. They do especially well in their personal development and in communication, language and literacy, but their calculation skills are not as strong.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that all lessons provide appropriate challenge for more able pupils
- give pupils clear guidance through marking on what they need to do to improve their work
- better involve pupils in evaluating their own learning by setting out clearly for them what it is they are expected to learn in lessons.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most pupils attain the nationally expected standards in the Year 2 and Year 6 tests, giving them a sound preparation for the next stage of their education and later life. However, relatively few pupils exceed the nationally expected standard. The school's testing in other year groups shows a similar picture, with more able pupils not making as much progress as they could. School leaders' monitoring has correctly identified that this is because more able pupils are not always challenged enough in lessons. There are signs of improvement this year, particularly in mathematics, but achievement remains only satisfactory because there are still too many lessons where more able pupils make notably less progress than those of average and lower ability. Those pupils with additional learning needs often make good progress because they benefit from good support in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Many parents wrote to inspectors to stress how happy their children are at Vigo Village School. As one, typically, wrote, 'Our son loves coming to school, and to us that is the key to everything.' Pupils confirm that they enjoy school because they find the topics they are taught interesting and fun. For most, attendance is good, although the school's overall attendance figures are depressed because of a very small number of transitory families whose children's attendance has been irregular.

This is a school where pupils feel safe because they are well looked after. Good links with outside agencies help to provide comprehensive instruction to pupils on how to keep safe, although this principally benefits the older pupils. Behaviour is good and pupils are attentive and often enthusiastic in lessons, listening well to each other as well as to their teachers. They take part keenly in a good range of sports and other physical activities and they demonstrate a good understanding of the need for a healthy diet. Pupils are also keen to take on responsibility, both within school and in the wider community; the very active school council manages its budget prudently and pupils raise impressive sums for a string of national and international charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Relationships throughout the school are good, and many lessons are characterised by a brisk pace of learning, with varied activities that keep pupils interested and involved. Not all pupils make as much progress as they could in lessons because work is not always matched closely enough to their different capabilities, although this is improving. Well-focused extra help is often available for those who need it, so pupils with learning difficulties sometimes make good progress in lessons. Too often, however, the work in lessons offers too little challenge to the more able pupils.

Pupils have a very clear understanding of the tasks they are expected to carry out because these are painstakingly explained by teachers at the start of each lesson. Though described by teachers as 'learning objectives', these often do not set out what it is that the pupils are expected to learn. This inhibits opportunities to involve pupils constructively in assessing their own progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A notable feature of this school is the way that skills, including those in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), are made relevant by being given a practical application as part of the study of other subjects, such as history and geography. The big improvement since the last inspection in facilities for ICT has led to much greater access to computers and higher standards in this subject. Pupils are excited by the opportunities they are given to learn modern foreign languages. They also take part with enthusiasm in the extensive range of clubs on offer, although there are rather more clubs open to the older pupils than the younger ones. There are early signs of success in the recent introduction of 'focus groups' to boost some pupils' performance in English and mathematics. However, this initiative is too recent to show whether the provision of an extra stimulus to different groups for a term at a time will have a sustained effect in raising standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

'I know my children are always well cared for.' This comment from a parent typified the views of many. Parents and pupils especially value the close relationships that staff have with their pupils in relatively small classes. Good welfare arrangements include measures for ensuring pupils' safety and, for example, systems for keeping a careful check on all the adults who work with children, in full accordance with the latest government regulations. These good care and support arrangements are not matched by such strong academic guidance. Marking, in particular, gives pupils insufficient guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Parents particularly value the school's 'open door' policy and the ready accessibility of school leaders and staff. They point to better communications and other recent changes which show this to be an improving school and show its sound capacity for further improvement. Certainly the headteacher's thorough monitoring of teaching, and of pupils' learning and progress, is an important strength which is already starting to have an impact on raising standards. Other school leaders also share in the vision for school improvement, though not all have had much involvement in monitoring provision and progress. School leaders' commitment to higher standards is evident in the now much more challenging whole-school targets for the 2008 national tests; these replace targets for 2007 which were unambitious and which were comfortably exceeded. Governors are supportive of the school but they have not done as much as they could to challenge school leaders over standards which could be higher.

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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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

15 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Vigo Village School, Gravesend DA13 0RL

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Yours is an improving school. It is giving you a satisfactory education and there are a number of things about the school that are good. You and your parents told us of some of the ways the headteacher and other school leaders were helping to make the school even better.

You told us how much you enjoy school and we were very pleased to see how well behaved you all are and how very well you get on with each other. Vigo Village is certainly a friendly place where you are helped to feel safe and secure. You are keen to learn and you told us how teachers make your learning interesting and fun. The way they link subjects together helps a lot because it gives you a chance to put what you learn to practical use. We saw, for example, how you had used tally sheets and graphs to record all the different species you spotted on 'birdwatching day' – though I don't think I believe that the wrens were quite as big as you painted them!

Children in the Reception Year get off to a good start but you do not all do quite as well higher up the school. Although most of you reach the nationally expected levels, we think some of you could be doing better and we have asked teachers to make sure that they do not set you work that is too easy. We have also asked them to make it clear at the start of lessons what it is that you are expected to learn and not just what you are going to be doing. That way, you will be better able to judge for yourselves how much you have learnt.

We could see that teachers' marking gives you lots of encouragement but we think you would be helped to do better if teachers set out more clearly for you what you need to do to improve your work. You can help too by continuing to work hard and by asking your teachers how you can make your work even better.

Best wishes, Selwyn Ward Lead Inspector

Annex B

15 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Vigo Village School, Gravesend DA13 ORL

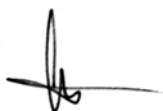
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Best wishes,



Selwyn Ward
Lead Inspector