

Valence Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101222
Local Authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	335675
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2010
Reporting inspector	David Collard

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	481
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Pateman
Headteacher	Elizabeth Chaplin
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Seventeen teachers were observed in 21 lessons or parts of lessons. Inspectors also observed other aspects of the school's work, scrutinised school documentation, observed some after-school clubs and held discussions with pupils, staff, governors and parents. They also analysed 166 parental questionnaires as well as those completed by approximately 100 pupils and from almost all the staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether different groups of pupils made consistently good progress through the school and were on track to attain standards at least as high as those expected for their age by the time they leave in Year 6
- whether the school's own self-evaluation is realistic and if leaders at all levels are playing their part in improving the school
- whether the school has successfully stabilised since the amalgamation.

Information about the school

This larger than average school was formed in April 2008 following an amalgamation between the infant and junior schools; this is the first inspection since then. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational needs. This is partly due to two centres within the school; a 16-place Nursery provision for children with complex and profound learning needs and a six-place Reception provision for children who are profoundly autistic. Almost all of these children will move onto special schools before they start Year 1. Two thirds of pupils are of White British heritage. One third of pupils come from a wide range of other different ethnic backgrounds. A quarter of pupils do not speak English as their first language.

The headteacher was appointed when the schools amalgamated and the two deputy headteachers were previously senior leaders in the infant and junior schools. The school has gained a silver Eco award and Healthy Schools status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In 18 months, Valence Primary has successfully become one cohesive school under the determined and highly effective leadership of the headteacher. It provides a good quality of education and there are already some exemplary elements. The whole school community, including staff, parents, pupils and the governing body, rightly feel confident about the future and want to make their school one of the best. Pupils' comments sum up what has been achieved: 'This is a really caring place!'; 'It is a pity they don't have a Year 7 and 8 as well!'

Many children's development on entry to the Nursery is below that expected for their age. Good teaching and provision ensure they progress well through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children in the specialist Nursery unit make equally good progress especially since there have been new resources such as the sensory room. Good progress continues for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, through the rest of the school because a high proportion of the teaching is good. Consequently, pupils reach or exceed national average standards. Attainment in Year 6 is where there has been the most dramatic improvement. These pupils, many of whom started with low standards and had underachieved previously, have caught up lost ground. The first year of national test results shows the proportion achieving the national expected Level 4 is above average and especially so in English, which is where much of the effort was focused last year. This all points to a school with a good capacity to improve in the future.

Pupils are confident, polite and proud of their school. They talk openly and honestly, take responsibilities seriously and want to share their successes with visitors. They accept that there are a few pupils who find it difficult to behave correctly but know that these occasions will not disrupt their own learning because incidents are handled sensitively and professionally by adults. The school's outstanding procedures for care, guidance, support and safeguarding mean that pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy.

The headteacher, with the able support of other leaders and good governance, has a very realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has enabled the correct improvements to be made and to eliminate weaker areas of the provision. For example, the quality of teaching has been improved and better use of assessment means that teachers are being held accountable for the progress of pupils in their classes. As a result, planning and marking have improved significantly and targets for groups are clearly understood by the pupils. However, day-to-day assessment information is not always used well enough to ensure that work for pupils provides each individual with the highest level of challenge or to provide them with further adult

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support; consequently, progress slows.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the progress of all pupils to that of the best by:
 - using day-to-day assessment information to refine the planning and delivery of lessons so that every individual pupil makes as much progress as possible
 - ensuring teachers and teaching assistants share a collective responsibility for the learning and progress of pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

After a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils continue to build well on their basic skills. Assessment information and work in pupils' books show that a very large majority make or exceed the levels of progress expected of them. This is especially the case in reading and writing and more recently in mathematics. For example, in one lesson pupils confidently used a range of quite difficult connective phrases to enhance their stories while in another, younger pupils explained how yeast helped to make their bread rolls rise. By Year 2, attainment is above the national average, particularly in writing. There is a more complicated picture in Key Stage 2. In the past, many of these pupils did not do so well and have gaps in their knowledge. For example, in pupils' writing, the content is often highly descriptive but on occasions, spelling lets them down. However, pupils themselves talk about how they feel they are, 'Doing so much better now' and this is evident in their work this year.

Pupils at an early stage of learning English are soon able to communicate confidently and, through good support, are taught how to use these oracy skills in good written English. One pupil talked about how much progress she had made in her short period at the school and this was evident in the recent interim tests she had completed. Pupils who show a particular gift are also able to make the best of their talents. For example, 40 pupils recently attended a successful mathematics session to help them improve their problem solving. This is all helping prepare pupils well for their future lives.

The many ethnic groups all work and play together well and their own backgrounds and beliefs are used to help others gain a better understanding of different cultures. Two pupils explained that in their previous school they had been badly bullied but, 'this wasn't happening now because everybody is encouraged to be friends'. Pupils make a good contribution to the community and the pupil-elected leadership team (PELT), school ambassadors and peer mediators have all ensured that the school has a calm and orderly atmosphere where learning can carry on unimpeded.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

This is a school with a deep and personal commitment to the care and welfare of pupils. It has successfully worked hard to make the curriculum real and relevant to the pupils' needs. Topics and themes are used effectively to combine subjects and the planning often links together many different aspects of learning. For example, in their science week one teacher made very good links with extending vocabulary such as 'transparent' and 'flexible' while pupils looked for objects in the playground. On occasions, this good planning does not take account of an individual pupil's progress and so opportunities are missed to provide the highest levels of challenge. Nevertheless, the delivery of lessons is pacy and interesting and many teachers have high expectations of their pupils. One teacher, for instance insisted that a certain amount was finished in a given time while another made sure that work was presented well. Both the school's monitoring and the evidence from the inspection indicate that all teachers are capable of producing good lessons where pupils learn well. Over three quarters of the lessons seen were graded good. There are few differences in the quality of teaching between classes and consequently pupils make consistent progress. The only variability lies in the effectiveness of teaching assistant support. Some is of extremely high quality. In a few cases it is just satisfactory, when the assistant does not engage with the pupils well enough or is not given the right type of direction by the classteacher.

Pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, are supported extremely well. Those with complex learning needs such as autism are encouraged to communicate and mix with others and when the need arises they are able to withdraw for 'time-out'. Administrative systems for safeguarding, care and welfare are extremely robust. The school is a very

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safe, but open and welcoming, community. Recently, a sophisticated survey and study have been completed on e-safety and, in discussion, pupils are keenly aware of the potential risks when using the internet.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has actively encouraged all staff to develop their skills and expertise, a fact appreciated in the overwhelmingly positive staff survey. In addition, she has, along with other senior leaders, very successfully combined the staff of the two schools. Strengths have been used to improve weaker elements in provision and high quality monitoring, particularly of teaching, has secured these improvements. The leadership team's ambitious drive to make the school even better is having a positive impact, something which both parents and pupils can see happening. Better assessment, particularly in Key Stage 2, has meant that any potential underachievement of pupils is dealt with early. This is a key reason why pupils' attainment, and as importantly progress, is rising by the end of Year 6. Effective leadership has also ensured that the school provides good equality of opportunity and that there is no evidence of discrimination. The governing body has played its part. It takes an active role in monitoring any improvements and in enhancing its own expertise through further training. This has helped ensure the completion of a thorough audit of the school's provision for community cohesion and checking of planning of the curriculum to plug any gaps. Safeguarding procedures for recruiting staff are fully in place and, with a high level of vulnerable pupils, the systems for training staff in child protection fulfil extremely well the needs of the school. Excellent partnerships have been established to deal with the special needs of some of the pupils, and links with other outside agencies all help develop the provision still further.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision, learning and children's development through the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and exemplary in the Nursery. Both the inside and extensive outside areas are used well and provide an extremely wide range of opportunities for children to explore and play. From the start of their time at school, children are encouraged to extend their social and personal skills, their basic skills in literacy and numeracy as well as providing them with opportunities to be creative, have physical exercise and develop a knowledge of the wider world. Despite these many positives, attainment in aspects of communication, language and literacy and numeracy remain low. Those new to learning English are encouraged through both the spoken and written word and for some through first language support. As a result, all children relate well to each other, play happily together and develop their learning successfully. Children who have complex needs are supported well in preparation for their move to other settings. They are encouraged to mix with other children but, when they find this too difficult, have the opportunity to work in quieter, more specialised areas. The Nursery staff have boundless energy and plan their activities to ensure that everybody learns and improves through play. For example, children loved being a train, using the correct language and stopping at the red light because, 'We only go on green.' The highly experienced and influential leader has developed a good plan to make the quality of provision even better. For example, she has reorganised the outside to help children utilise the area more effectively. She has also ensured that the thorough tracking of children enables staff to know what is needed next and how this might be effectively undertaken.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

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Views of parents and carers

Approximately a third of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire and their views are overwhelmingly positive. There are many comments about how well the staff have managed the amalgamation of two very different schools and how successfully teachers have moved on their children's learning. This is exemplified by the 98% of parents who feel that, 'overall they are happy with their child's experience at school'. There are very few parents and carers who have concerns. The most negative comment, although relatively small, is about how the school deals with behaviour. Inspectors can confirm, however, that the school deals with unacceptable behaviour well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Valence Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 166 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 481 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	106	64	54	33	3	2	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	105	63	60	36	1	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	81	49	75	45	2	1	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	93	56	63	38	5	3	5	1
The teaching is good at this school	105	63	54	33	5	3	5	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	95	57	62	37	5	3	5	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	48	78	47	6	4	6	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	66	40	84	51	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	77	46	80	48	3	2	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	71	43	77	46	8	5	8	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	75	45	74	45	4	2	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	89	54	69	42	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	112	67	50	30	1	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



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19 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Valence Primary School, Dagenham RM8 3AR

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. We enjoyed talking to so many of you and joining you in your lessons. I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that we have said in our report that yours is a good school. As I promised some of you I have included the other main points from our report below.

- You told us that you felt the school had come a long way since it joined together in 2008. We agree. We have said that there have been many improvements so that you are all making good progress, especially those of you who are older.
- The first year of SATs results were above average. Those of you in Year 6 have a lot to live up to!
- We have also said that you have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. The work you have recently done on keeping safe when using computers will help make sure this continues.
- You told us that you think everybody behaves well although there are still just a few occasions when some children are not kind to one another. We also agree with this. You can help make sure these do not happen by talking to your PELT members, peer mediators or school ambassadors.
- Your headteacher, along with all the rest of the staff know what to do to make your school even better. They have already made some very good changes and have a lot more plans for the future. You can help with this by making your suggestions about improvements and working as hard as you can.
- We have asked your teachers to make sure that they give you all really challenging work to do and make sure that you always get the support you need from all the adults.

Finally, we hope your school continues to improve. It certainly has the potential to do so. Continue being proud of your school.

Yours sincerely

David Collard
Lead inspector

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