

Valley Road Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133559
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	341397
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Millett

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	348
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Clyde
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Young
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons, and held meetings with a governor, the principal, members of staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, the school's monitoring records and analyses of pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors analysed 37 questionnaires returned by parents.

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

- the achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and how successfully provision ensures an effective start to school
- the levels of challenge available for the more able pupils
- the impact of the school's strategy for improving attendance.

Information about the school

Valley Road is a much larger than average size primary school. A very large majority of pupils are White British, the remainder representing a wide range of other ethnicities. A very small minority do not speak English as their first language. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the number of pupils entitled to free school meals. An exceptionally high number of pupils enter or leave school during the course of the school year. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in one Nursery and two Reception classes. The school was designated a Children's Centre in 2006 and the governing body manages a number of extended services, including the Early Days Nursery for children 0 to 3, a breakfast club and after-school club. The school has gained the Investors in People Award.

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

Valley Road is a good school. Pupils enjoy being at school and are enthusiastic about their learning and the range of opportunities they are given. The large majority of parents are supportive and value the standard of care provided by the school. One parent commented, 'I am very proud of the school and teachers are very supportive and caring'. All staff know the pupils and their circumstances extremely well and, to quote another parent, 'staff really go that extra mile to help you'. Strong pastoral care helps pupils develop the confidence and independence they need to achieve well.

Leadership and management are good. The dedicated Principal is focused on providing a high quality education for all pupils. This goal is shared by her equally committed and caring staff and by governors. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and plans for the future reflect what needs to improve. As a result, the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

Children get off to a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage after entering Nursery with knowledge and skills that are well below those expected for their age. Pupils make good progress as they move up through the school, because they are taught well. By the time they leave Year 6, most have reached standards which are broadly average. After improving its results in writing, the school has rightly recognised that achievement in mathematics is not as strong as that in English. Work to address this is beginning to have an impact, but the proportion of pupils achieving the higher National Curriculum levels in mathematics is, however, inconsistent and more able pupils would benefit from greater challenge. Additionally, pupils do not always understand how to improve their work. The school uses assessment well to monitor individual pupils' progress though this is not yet feeding into a fully efficient system for checking on the progress of different groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English make the same good progress as their peers.

All staff work hard to make lessons interesting. Pupils enjoy learning because their work is well chosen and is matched to their needs and abilities. Lessons are well planned and classrooms well managed. The engaging curriculum enriches pupils' experiences through a wide range of activities, visits and visitors. While attendance is low, due to circumstances beyond the school's control, such as parents being unable to get their children to school or pupils leaving suddenly and remaining on the register, the school has many highly effective systems in place which are bringing about improvement. Targets are being met and sometimes exceeded. Senior managers, class teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide the pupils with outstanding care and support. A key feature of this high level of care for pupils and parents is the strength of

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the partnerships that exist between home, school and other agencies. As a result, pupils themselves have very positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable more pupils to reach the higher levels in mathematics by increasing the level of challenge for the more able and ensuring that pupils understand how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Make the best use of assessments by introducing an effective tracking system that is accessible to all members of staff and which will enable them to monitor even more closely the levels of progress made by different groups of learners.
- Improve attendance rates, for example, by working closely with local agencies to locate pupils who leave suddenly so that they can be removed from the school register more promptly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The effect of very high levels of mobility on groups of pupils gives a distorted overall picture of achievement and standards. Because of this, the school sometimes makes good use of assessment in order to accurately monitor the attainment and levels of progress made by different groups of learners. For example, less than half of the current Year 6 class started Valley Road in the Reception classes. From very low starting points these pupils have made good progress as they have gone through the school to reach standards that are broadly in line with national expectations. A similar picture can be seen in other year groups. The school's assessment and tracking procedures show that those pupils who start late also make good progress. However, these systems are not as efficient as they could be and would benefit from being made more accessible to all staff.

Pupils' learning shows a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Work seen in lessons and in pupils' books shows that progress is accelerating. A high level of pupils' involvement in their learning was seen. Very effective use is made of 'talk partners' as demonstrated in a literacy lesson during which the learning of plurals was reinforced through discussion.

Pupils are friendly and polite and show respect for adults and each other. Older pupils present positive role models for the younger children. They appreciate the care and support they receive from staff. The school experiences below average levels of attendance overall, although the attendance of the majority of pupils is average. The school works extremely hard to bring about improvement in attendance and is seeing an upward trend. However, the good grounding pupils receive in social and basic skills helps to prepare them satisfactorily for the next stages of learning. Pupils are well aware of a wide range of healthy living issues. They also have a clear understanding of the importance of keeping fit and know ways in which to keep themselves safe. Pupils respond well to the responsibilities they are given and make positive contributions to the school and community beyond. The school's successful work to meet all needs, the

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assemblies, circle time and the well planned curriculum ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils from different backgrounds work and play harmoniously together.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

This is an exceptionally caring school that places great importance on developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Adults know pupils well and respond positively to their needs. Sensitive care and working closely with parents enables pupils who arrive part way through the school year to fit in and work alongside their classmates. The individual needs of these children are quickly assessed and help given where needed. Pupils know that if they have a problem there is always someone there to help them. 'Our teachers are nice and help everyone,' commented one pupil. Pupils at risk of underachievement, those at an early stage of learning English and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well supported by experienced, well-trained staff, and through very strong links with outside agencies. The exceptional work of the Education Home Visitor and her team to ensure pupils get to school is having an impact. The

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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breakfast club and 'morning drift' where parents accompany their children into the classroom before registration and participate in a 'challenge' together, are improving punctuality.

Teaching is good throughout the school and lessons offer a wide range of carefully chosen activities that engage pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and make good progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and learning objectives are usually shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons. Planning is thorough and work is generally well matched to pupils' needs, though the more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently, particularly in mathematics. Accurate assessments are carried out regularly and used to ensure the needs of all learners are met. Pupils' work is marked regularly, although pupils do not always receive clear enough instruction as to how they can improve.

The school provides a well planned curriculum which stimulates pupils' interests and contributes well to their personal development. It also enables them to make good progress as they move through the school. The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of additional activities which pupils thoroughly enjoy. For example, day visits, visitors and residential visits add to the excitement of learning. Meaningful links across different subjects are emerging through the use of themes or topics. These give pupils the increased opportunities to make purposeful use of their basic skills. Information and communication technology is well used to support learning and teaching. Creativity is developed well, as shown by the attractively displayed artwork around the school. There is good provision for music through singing. In partnership with Extended Schools, the school provides an extensive range of lunchtime and after-school clubs which enhances pupils' knowledge and skills.

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 dedicated principal and enthusiastic staff and governors share the same drive and ambition for the school and are committed to providing the best education possible for all pupils in the face of challenging circumstances, due to high mobility and low attendance. Their vision has equality of opportunity at its heart and is one of the key reasons for the school's progress, as strenuous efforts have been made to eliminate differences in performance. For example, the school is working to involve more staff in tracking the relative progress of different groups of pupils. The school development plan

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is directly focused on improving pupils' achievement and enjoyment of learning. Good use is being made of targets and these are becoming increasingly demanding. Governors are fully supportive of the school and play an effective role in monitoring and challenging its performance. The promotion of community cohesion is strong. Pupils from the school take part in many local events. In addition to being at the heart of the local community, the school has links with a rural school in Cumbria and extends pupils' knowledge of other faiths and cultures. Pupils already have positive attitudes towards ethnic diversity.

At the time of the inspection all safeguarding and health and safety requirements were met. Risk assessments are routinely carried out.

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
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	2
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

Children get off to a good start in Nursery. They enter school with attainment that is well below that expected for their age. The majority have poor language and communication skills and each year a significant minority join with speech and language difficulties. Good routines and high quality care ensure children settle quickly and make good progress. Younger children learn new routines and what is expected of them by following the good example of older Reception children. Nevertheless, despite making good progress, the proportion of children reaching expected levels in all areas of learning by the end of Reception is below average. Children enjoy their learning. They feel safe and secure and from an early age are sufficiently confident to explore the activities provided for them.

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Teaching is good because staff know the children well and present them with tasks that match their interests and abilities. Sometimes opportunities are missed to engage children in conversation when they are working independently. This restricts their ability to extend their vocabulary and recognise what they are learning.

Leadership and management are good and ensure that staff work well as a team to support children, their families and each other. Links with parents are very good, helping parents to support their children's learning at home. Parents are very happy with how well their children are cared for and say that they enjoy coming to school.

Extremely strong links exist with Early Days pre-school care. This setting provides excellent care for children 0 to 3 years as well as high quality support for parents. Staff are highly qualified and fully committed to the welfare and well-being of children. They have created a warm, nurturing environment which allows very young children to explore and learn in a structured and very productive way. There is a strong focus on language development through song and rhyme. Children are happy and contented throughout the day. Those with additional needs are identified early and both here and in the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit excellent links are made with external agencies to provide specialist support to help children overcome any difficulties. Both the deputy manager and the manager provide very good leadership and are continually developing and enhancing provision. The provision complies with requirements for registration.

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	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The vast majority feel that the school is well led. Almost all feel that their child enjoys school and they are very pleased with their child's progress. The inspection agrees with these perceptions.

A very small minority of parents had concerns about behaviour in school, but the inspectors could find no evidence to uphold these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Valley Road Community 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 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 381 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	74	18	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	62	26	35	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	54	30	41	2	3	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	54	30	41	4	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	63	24	33	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	54	32	43	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	43	40	54	2	3	0	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)	36	50	32	44	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	49	34	46	4	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	47	32	44	2	3	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	44	36	49	2	3	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	42	58	28	38	0	0	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	57	30	41	0	0	2	3

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



Inspection of Valley Road Community Primary School, Sunderland, SR2 8P

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently; a special 'thank you' to those members of the school council who gave up their time to talk to us. Many of you told us that Valley Road is a good school, and we agree.

What we liked most about your school:

- you are very friendly, polite and helpful to visitors and each other
- your behaviour is good
- you get off to a good start in Nursery and make good progress over your time in the school to reach average standards
- you enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn
- adults look after you exceptionally well and make sure you are safe
- teaching is good, and your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and exciting
- the school is well led and managed, and almost all your parents are very pleased with the school and the help you receive
- you show a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe
- you contribute to the life of the school and the local community
- you are well prepared for the next stages in your education.

To make your school even better, this is what we would like to happen now:

- those of you who find the work easy to be given more difficult work more often, especially in mathematics
- that you try very hard to come to school every day so you can continue to learn
- your teachers to track very carefully how well you are doing and let you know what to do next.

I know you will help your teachers to carry on making your school even better by continuing to work hard.

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