

Valentine Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132025
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	354528
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Coffin
Headteacher	Diane Hobbs
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed 10 teachers. Inspectors also held meetings with pupils, staff with key responsibilities and with representatives of the governing body. In addition to observing the school's work and evaluating documentation such as policies, the school improvement plan, pupils' work and records of their learning and progress, the inspectors examined 61 completed questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- children's attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, their progress in Reception and their attainment on entry to Year 1
- pupils' current attainment in Year 2 and their progress in Key Stage 1, especially in reading
- the consistency of good and excellent teaching across the whole school
- the extent to which temporary senior leadership is developed and the impact of leadership and management at all levels on raising achievement

Information about the school

Valentine Infants is a little above average in size. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few are at early stages of learning English as an additional language. An above-average percentage of pupils are known to be entitled to free school meals. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average, although the number of those with a statement of special educational needs is average. Their range of needs include speech, language, literacy, numeracy, behavioural, social and emotional problems. Over the last two years, there have been significant disruptions to the senior leadership team because of the long-term absences of several senior leaders.

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

This is a good school which has some outstanding aspects to its work. The atmosphere is very welcoming and relationships are excellent. Pupils learn well in a very attractive, well-resourced and organised environment. The outstanding care, support and guidance are evident in every aspect of school life. Pupils feel exceptionally safe and this, together with an interesting curriculum, encourages them to come to love school. Excellent partnerships with other schools and outside agencies underpin pupils' improving attainment and enjoyment of school. In keeping with the school's ethos, excellent pastoral care includes outstanding support for vulnerable pupils. By Year 2 pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are excellent. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has been very effective in steering the school through an extended period of changes to the senior team. She is backed up well by the leadership team, staff and governors, who share her vision.

Pupils' achievement is good. From starting points that are below those expected for their age, children's good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage leads to average attainment on entry to Year 1. In Key Stage 1 pupils' progress is good overall and, by Year 2, their attainment is above average overall, though is weaker in reading than in writing and mathematics. Pupils' enjoyment of and skills in writing are fostered from the start and by Year 2 they write well for a range of purposes. Their handwriting is excellent while spelling and punctuation are good. In mathematics an increased emphasis on developing mental skills has accelerated pupils' ability to try different approaches to problems and explain their thinking, and has boosted their attainment as well. However, there is still more to do to, especially for boys, to improve attainment in reading. The school is improving provision, but it is too early to see the full impact on reading standards. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress overall. However, a small minority of these pupils do not always attend as regularly as they should and this slows their progress.

There is a well-established cycle of self-evaluation. Senior and middle leaders and staff systematically use the school-wide tracking system to accurately measure pupils' progress and identify any gaps in progress towards their realistic targets. This has led to significant changes in provision for Reception children resulting in a rise in attainment on entry to Year 1. The strong focus on improving teaching and learning is also raising pupils' attainment and the school is looking to provide more opportunities to increase the sharing of outstanding practice. Teaching is good overall and a significant minority of lessons are outstanding. However, occasionally teachers set work that is insufficiently challenging for more-capable pupils or too hard for lower-attaining pupils. Support assistants often provide good support, but there are a few instances when their time is

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not used to full advantage.

The school has a good capacity to improve partly because everyone shares the senior leaders' ambitions. New senior leadership roles are developing well and governors make a good contribution to the school's future. The school has recovered well from substantial senior staffing changes and this is seen in pupils' rising attainment, for instance in mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in reading in Key Stage 1 by:
 - raising the proportions reaching average levels, especially boys, so they match those in writing and mathematics
 - strengthening systems for hearing pupils read
 - ensuring the improvement plan shows precise monitoring information and use this to evaluate the impact of initiatives on raising attainment.
- Increase the consistency of good and better teaching and learning by:
 - consistently meeting the needs of lower- and higher-attaining pupils
 - increasing the sharing of excellent practice
 - making better use of support assistants' time so they always guide pupils well in their learning.
- Improve the attendance of some lower-attaining pupils in order to accelerate their progress by:
 - working closely with families to ensure they appreciate the impact of poor attendance on their children's learning and progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' improved attainment at the end of Reception is being built upon well in Key Stage 1. New systems for teaching sounds and letters (phonics) are being implemented and there is some excellent teaching and learning in this area, although this is not yet consistent throughout the school. In an excellent phonics lesson observed in Year 2, no time was lost because both pupils and teaching staff were very familiar with routines. The extremely good match to pupils' prior attainment for speaking, sounds, reading and writing ensured all pupils learned at a good pace. An excellent balance of activities enabled pupils to apply their previously learned skills and they also rapidly learned new ones. Small group work in English and mathematics contributes to the good achievement of vulnerable pupils and for those with special educational needs. Pupils' behaviour is good overall and excellent by Year 2. The significant minority of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are helped extremely well to adjust to school. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour are unusual and rare by Year 2.

Adults' excellent relationships with pupils mean that learning takes place in a supportive atmosphere. The school's focus on developing pupils' independence boosts their ability

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to take some responsibility for their own learning. They gradually learn to work together and, by Year 2, cooperate very well when working in pairs or small groups. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The strong community ethos enables pupils of different backgrounds to get on well together and older pupils are very good role models for younger ones. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the school and wider community through their school council and 'eco' work, including gardening, and develop a pride in keeping their surroundings neat and tidy. Pupils are keen to adopt healthy lifestyles and enjoy sport, reflecting the school's work on securing the Healthy School award. Most attend school regularly and the school works hard with both pupils and parents to emphasise the importance of good attendance. However, a significant minority of lower-attaining pupils do not come to school as regularly as they should and this restricts their progress. The extent to which pupils apply their basic skills and develop their personal skills prepares them well for their move to junior school.

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	2
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?

Teachers are well organised and they manage their pupils successfully. Classrooms are

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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calm and purposeful because teachers have high and consistent expectations for pupils' personal development. Attractive displays support pupils' learning. Teachers use resources well, including interactive whiteboards and computers, to bring learning alive. They use a wide range of approaches, which enable pupils to learn from each other as well as through listening and watching. Pupils are given good opportunities to evaluate their own work. Planning and teaching methods often reflect pupils' different learning needs and this is extremely effective for pupils in Year 2. Assessment is thorough and teachers have a good understanding of National Curriculum levels, but occasionally work is insufficiently challenging for more-capable pupils or too hard for lower-attaining ones. The broad curriculum focuses on teaching the key skills of literacy and numeracy and there is a strong emphasis on developing information and communication technology skills. Practical activities and a rich array of visits and visitors enliven the curriculum and bring relevance to pupils' learning. The school's excellent links with other schools, including the local secondary school for sport, enhance teachers' subject expertise and pupils' learning. The school has recently stepped up systems for hearing pupils read, although these are not yet uniform in each class. Pupils are extremely well looked after and there are excellent systems across the school for child protection and health and safety. Very thorough induction arrangements, when pupils join the school and when they move on, help to ease the transition from one stage to the next. Adults provide very strong support for the social and emotional development of all pupils, including those with challenging behaviour. The school has good links with parents and excellent links with a range of other agencies to ensure pupils' welfare and specific medical and learning needs are met well.

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 and senior leaders are very successful in inspiring all members of the school to share a strong sense of purpose and to work effectively as a team. There are clear systems and structures for managing the school. The senior team, including temporary senior leaders, have a clear idea of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This is based on an accurate view of teaching and learning. Staff feel very well supported and benefit from professional development opportunities. The school has correctly evaluated the need to share outstanding practice more frequently. The recent introduction of national assessment materials for reading is enabling teachers to become

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more skilled in analysing the impact of their provision on pupils' progress. Leaders at all levels have undertaken monitoring of teaching and learning; however, recent staffing changes mean that several middle leaders are new to their roles and are still receiving training to equip them to play their full part in this.

The school improvement plan accurately identifies areas for improvement, but the details of how new initiatives are to be monitored are imprecise, especially for reading. This prevents leaders, staff and governors readily evaluating the impact of actions on improving achievement. Governors are very well led by a knowledgeable chair. They support the school very well, evaluate assessment data and ask challenging questions. Systems for safeguarding and risk assessment are exemplary and receive the highest priority. The school is vigilant in tackling discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity well. It strives, with success, to ensure vulnerable pupils have every opportunity to adjust to school and achieve. It makes a strong impact on promoting community cohesion locally and global links are also established. The school has planned well to widen pupils' understanding of the different communities in Britain today.

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	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

Children settle quickly in a very safe, secure and welcoming environment. Their attainment on entry varies but, overall, is below the levels expected because a minority have weaknesses in their speaking, listening and personal skills. Children make good progress and, by the end of Reception, their attainment is average overall, including in

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reading and numeracy. Writing is still a little below average because slightly fewer reach the expected levels than found in most schools. The strong focus on developing children's language, personal and basic skills in the context of a broad and practical curriculum gives children a good start. Children make excellent progress in developing their fine motor skills and this prepares them very well for writing. They explore and learn well through carefully planned practical activities both indoors and outside. Adults strike a good balance between more formal, adult-led activities and those that children select for themselves. Corridors are used to provide stimulating role play activities, but occasionally adults do not intervene enough to develop children's learning at such times. The large outdoor area is well equipped and used particularly effectively during 'Sparkle Time' when children plan and review their own activities.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good with effective teamwork between all staff. Assessment is thorough and often used well to plan carefully matched learning activities. However, there is not enough challenge on occasions for more capable children.

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

About a quarter of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The ones who responded are generally very pleased with the school. They agree that their children are kept very safe and enjoy school. They are usually happy with their children's experiences at the school. Parents of pupils with significant learning needs told inspectors they are delighted with the pastoral care and welfare their children receive and said how well their children are progressing. A few parents expressed concern that progress was not as good in one year as in others due to much staff absence in one class. Inspectors find the school is addressing this and takes all steps to minimise the impact on pupils' progress. A significant minority of parents expressed concern about pupils' behaviour. Inspectors find that behaviour is good overall and excellent by Year 2. The school ensures that children who have difficulty in behaving properly on entry are supported well so they learn what is acceptable. No other concerns were expressed by more than a small minority of parents and carers. Inspectors agree with parents' and carers' positive comments.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Valentine Infant 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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 246 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	74	15	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	62	21	34	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	43	31	51	4	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	59	22	36	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	34	56	25	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	51	24	39	5	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	56	24	39	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)	30	49	23	38	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	48	30	49	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	43	23	38	7	11	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	46	24	39	3	5	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	35	57	21	34	4	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	59	20	33	2	3	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



9 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Valentine Infant School, Sholing, Southampton S019 0EQ

Thank you for making us welcome when we recently visited your school. We really enjoyed finding out about the interesting things you do. This letter is to tell you what we found on our inspection.

First, you need to know your school is a good one. Here are some of the many things your school does well

- You make good progress and your attainment is above average in writing and mathematics by Year 2.
- You make your school such a special place because you are friendly, work hard and behave well.
- You have good opportunities for developing your computer skills.
- You have really good opportunities for sport and for outside visits.
- You understand how important it is to keep fit and healthy and enjoy sport. You know you should not eat too many sweets and cake
- Your teachers are good at making your lessons interesting.
- Staff take extremely good care of you and you told us how safe you feel.
- Your headteacher leads you all very well and all the staff and governors think very carefully about what is best for you.

This is what we are asking your school to do to improve.

- Help those of you in Key Stage 1 to reach similar standards in reading as you do in writing and mathematics.
- Make sure your work is never too easy or too hard.
- Make sure you all attend school as often as you should and help your families to realise how important this is for your learning and future.

We hope you will continue to enjoy school and carry on working hard in all you do. Well done for taking such good care of your surroundings. Please keep this up!

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick

Lead Inspector

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