

Valley Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104052
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	377011
Inspection dates	2–3 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Kerr

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Grieves
Headteacher	Roberta Narroway
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2006
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons and saw seven teachers teaching. Discussions were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors also looked at selected documentation such as policies, teachers' planning and monitoring records. They took into account questionnaire returns from five staff and 55 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How high are pupils' current attainment levels in English and mathematics?
- Do boys and girls of all abilities achieve equally well, including those pupils capable of reaching high attainment levels?
- How extensive are opportunities for pupils to explore and investigate in areas that interest them?
- Is progress equally good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1?

Information about the school

This is an average-sized infant school serving the suburban area in which it is situated. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average, having doubled over the past three years. About one in four of these pupils speak English as an additional language, but very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average but has risen sharply in recent years. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than in most infant schools. The great majority of these pupils have speech, language and communication needs. Very few have a statement of special educational needs. The school holds the Activemark and Healthy School status. During the inspection major building work was taking place at the school.

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. An outstanding curriculum helps pupils to develop a wide range of personal qualities and skills and prepares them exceptionally well for their future lives. Boys and girls make equally good progress, and attainment in English and mathematics is above average by the end of Year 2. Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in pupils' mature and reflective comments, their very strong moral sense, and their knowledge and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity. They show a particularly well-developed awareness of their place in the wider society and how they can contribute. They feel very secure in school, showing a good knowledge of safety rules, for example the dangers of social networking sites, and acquire very healthy eating and exercise habits.

Teachers use much-improved assessment and tracking procedures well to plan work that challenges pupils of all abilities. In most lessons, pupils have plenty of opportunities to discuss their ideas and improve their speaking and listening skills, for example through regular use of talk partners. Less effective learning occurs when pupils have too few opportunities to explain their thinking and to talk to each other. Opportunities for further investigation are therefore missed on occasions and misconceptions overlooked. Even so, good behaviour is a feature of most lessons and instances of restless behaviour are rare.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, and good transition into Key Stage 1 ensures continuity in learning. Pupils are kept safe and their personal needs are provided for well. Outside expertise is used well to support pupils with the most severe speech, language and communication needs, who are fully included and make good progress. Staff expertise in ensuring similar quality of provision and progress for all other pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved, ensuring good progress for the whole group.

'Valley is a fantastic school and this is because of all staff and the head. It has a lovely warm atmosphere as you enter.' This comment reflects the justified appreciation of parents and carers of the strong leadership provided by the headteacher and the excellent teamwork. The school has an accurate awareness of its strengths and areas for improvement. Monitoring is thorough and identifies strengths and weaknesses in teaching that have been used well to improve provision throughout the school. It has not been used quite so effectively to identify how pupils' learning can be brought up to an outstanding level.

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The school has improved significantly since the last inspection. Excellent partnerships with other schools and agencies have greatly enriched the curriculum and full equality of opportunity is robustly assured. Provision for community cohesion is exemplary, enabling pupils to make an exceptional contribution to the school and wider community. The governing body knows the school well and has good systems for holding it to account. The school therefore has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further and improve pupils' oral and thinking skills by:
 - providing more consistent and varied opportunities for pupils to speak at some length in lessons, using talk partners, role-play, drama and other techniques more widely throughout the school
 - allowing pupils more time to fully explain their thinking and using these responses to shape activities that extend and enrich their learning.

- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching by:
 - using lesson observations and other monitoring activities more effectively to evaluate how well pupils learn and identify clear pointers for improvement
 - focusing subsequent monitoring on these improvement targets.

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

Attainment is above average in English and mathematics in Year 2, where most of the pupils are working at or above the expected levels for their age. Examples of high quality art work and higher-level questions generated by pupils in science reflect good achievement across the curriculum. Attainment is broadly at the level expected in Year 1 in writing, reflecting a recent decline in attainment on entry to the nursery in communication, language and literacy. The pupils' work in mathematics is above average in each year group, with some exceptionally high attainment reflecting the good progress made by gifted and talented pupils.

The pupils learn well in most lessons because they listen carefully to instructions, apply themselves diligently to tasks and collaborate well when required. The best learning was seen when plenty of talking opportunities were provided and the activities met the full range of needs in the class. For example, pupils in Year 1 made good progress in writing a list because of animated discussions in pairs and deciding which suggestions were best under the teacher's guidance. Good learning also occurred in the same lesson when some pupils worked at practical activities while the teacher and teaching assistant helped others to write lists. They were absorbed for a long period of time on their chosen tasks, producing good quality pictures in a calm, purposeful atmosphere. Behaviour was outstanding in this lesson, as it was in all such sessions in which pupils were fully engaged. Less rapid progress was seen when pupils did not get these opportunities to learn actively and fully explain their ideas

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and behaviour on these occasions was still good, but not exemplary.

Pupils show a high degree of maturity for their age in discussing moral dilemmas, such as what to do about finding lost property. They also explain why they choose to support guide dogs for the deaf or Help for Heroes. Their knowledge of different religions is also very good and they show an exceptional insight into the place of prayer in human life and in different religions. Many pupils take on responsibilities in the school such as being a member of the school council. They also have experience of growing food for use in the school kitchen and of how such produce is marketed. They gain an excellent knowledge about children in different circumstances through links with other schools, both elsewhere within the United Kingdom and in other countries. Together with good achievement, good and often outstanding behaviour, above average attendance and very good punctuality, these personal qualities make a significant contribution to the pupils’ future economic well-being.

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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

A key factor in pupils’ good academic and outstanding personal outcomes is the rich and varied curriculum. The school continuously strives to make learning interesting and stimulating. For example, the Year 2 cloakroom area is regularly transformed by pupils’ responses to objects that are ‘discovered’ in the model ‘Tardis’ such as a book on the subject of cave paintings. The pupils’ own impressions of cave paintings on display in the area, together with the writing that emerged, are of high quality, reflecting the excellent opportunities pupils have to apply their literacy skills across

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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the curriculum. Mathematics is also linked in very well to other subjects, as when pupils calculated the strides of different dinosaurs by measuring the distance between scale-model footprints in the playground. Digital cameras, computers and other modern technologies are also incorporated wherever possible, giving the pupils good skills for later stages of their education. Partnerships with other providers are used well to supplement what the school can provide from its own resources. Currently, musical instrumental tuition is being extended through this channel. Extra-curricular activities include well-attended football practice sessions, which are demanding and rewarding for the pupils involved.

The teaching seen during the inspection was mostly good with a small number of satisfactory lessons. Teachers plan diligently based on assessments of the pupils’ prior attainment. They use visual and electronic aids such as puppets and whiteboards to make presentations more interesting, but sometimes miss opportunities to fully involve the pupils in these activities. Tasks set for different ability groups sometimes lead to discussion and investigation, but in less effective lessons they are focused too closely on getting the correct outcome rather than how it is to be achieved. The rare instances of restless behaviour that were seen occurred on such occasions because not all pupils were fully engaged in the lesson.

The school takes good care of pupils, keeping them safe and encouraging them to adopt healthy lifestyles. It has responded well to the influx of pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties through tailoring the curriculum to their individual needs and deploying specialist support where necessary. Good information is provided for parents and carers during the school year and especially at times of transition. Some parents and carers expressed their appreciation of the smooth transition from Reception to Year 1. Attendance and punctuality have been substantially improved over the past year, particularly through informing parents and carers in detail of how frequent short absences affect pupils’ learning opportunities. Attendance for the current term is very high. Bullying is not tolerated, and thoughtful behaviour is encouraged.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is very effective in creating a shared vision for the school among staff. She has overseen the implementation of robust monitoring procedures and managed deployments within the school well to make the most of available expertise

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in each phase. Lesson observations are carried out regularly and have improved some aspects of classroom practice. However, they do not consistently identify how pupils’ learning can be improved or use improvement targets as benchmarks for subsequent monitoring.

The governing body fulfils its functions well. It works very closely with the headteacher and staff. Each member of the governing body is linked with a member of staff and collaborates with them to gain an insight into the workings of the school. Expertise within the governing body is harnessed well to help inform its deliberations and enable it to ask searching questions of the headteacher. Together the staff and governing body ensure a high level of vigilance against discrimination and ensure full equality of opportunity within the school, with close tracking of pupils’ progress to ensure that all groups do equally well.

Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements and are exemplary in respect of health and safety checks and guarding against the dangers of social networking sites. The school promotes community cohesion exceedingly well. An action plan based on a rigorous audit of the school’s context has led to local, national and international links that have had a clear impact on the pupils’ appreciation of religious, ethnic and socio-economic diversity. The school regularly evaluates the effectiveness of the plans and modifies them according to emerging needs.

The school has been well managed through the current building work, ensuring minimum disruption to learning.

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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

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The Nursery and Reception classes provide a warm, welcoming, safe environment. Children enter the nursery with broadly expected levels of development for their age, and make good progress across the areas of learning. Skills in communication, language and literacy remain an area of weakness for a minority of pupils, and this is taken into account on transition into Year 1.

The children settle very quickly into the nursery routines, making friends and enjoying the many stimulating and purposeful play activities. Many of these tasks encourage creative expression well. For example, during a plan-and-choose session, children persevered with great concentration to produce very elaborate bonfire night pictures by flicking, splashing and brushing paints onto a large sheet of paper, mixing colours independently. Many were bursting with pride in their achievement.

Transition into Reception from the nursery is very smooth and this ensures good continuity in learning throughout the setting. The two Reception classes shared one room during the inspection because of the building work, but this did not restrict learning except for access to the outdoor area. This had to be closely supervised and directed for safety reasons but the children still enjoyed a variety of play outdoors, for example riding bicycles and toy vehicles. Teaching is good throughout. Teachers and teaching assistants quickly settle the children into daily routines so that they spend maximum time learning through purposeful play. Adults support children well as they play, interacting with them to assess their progress and to support their learning. The children respond very positively to class lessons such as physical education and religious education. These engender a sense of belonging to a larger group and promote many aspects of personal development, preparing the children well for lessons in Key Stage 1.

The setting is led and managed well. The teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together as a team and share a determination to continue improving provision. Regular assessments are made of the children’s progress, but these are not yet fully utilised to set specific targets for future learning, particularly for supporting children’s spoken language.

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

The return rate of questionnaires was below the national average for primary schools. The views expressed by those parents and carers that did respond were

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very positive. Many submitted favourable written comments, praising, for example, the leadership of the headteacher, the approachability of all staff and the warm, welcoming atmosphere in the school. There were no areas in which a significant number of parents and carers expressed dissatisfaction, and the very few critical comments received were brought anonymously to the headteacher's attention.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Valley 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 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 215 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	75	14	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	75	12	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	35	63	17	31	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	64	16	29	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	73	14	25	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	35	64	18	33	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	60	22	40	0	0	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)	34	62	18	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	34	62	18	33	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	42	27	49	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	47	25	45	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	35	64	15	27	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	41	75	12	22	0	0	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 all 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 8 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



4 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Valley Infant School, Solihull, B92 9HQ

Thank you for making our visit to your school so enjoyable, and telling us your views. You were polite and friendly and a pleasure to talk to. Yours is a good school. Your teachers give you lots of interesting things to do. You work hard and get good results in reading, writing and mathematics. Your art work is also very good. Your teachers look after you well. We were impressed with how much you know about keeping safe, fit and healthy. You also know a lot about different religions and you do your best to help people less fortunate than yourselves. You explained very clearly why you wanted to raise money for guide dogs for the deaf and Help for Heroes.

The school is getting better all the time, and to help in this we have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities to talk about your work in class, to explain your thinking more often and to do more role-play and drama so that you get even better at speaking and listening. We have asked the headteacher and governing body to make sure that this happens in all lessons, so that you make the best possible progress. You can help by trying your best to explain how you think, so that you all get even more out of your lessons.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful and I wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Kerr
Lead inspector

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