

Vale School

Trulock Road, Tottenham, London, N17 0PG

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school because:

- The care, guidance and support provided by all staff are of the highest quality, leading to pupils developing their confidence and independence very effectively.
- Systematic school improvement has been sustained through considerable changes in the complexity of pupils' needs and in staffing, particularly in the senior leadership team and in the governing body.
- In their academic learning, pupils of different ages, backgrounds and abilities make good progress and achieve well. They achieve particularly well in the development of their communication and social skills and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- In the vast majority of lessons, teachers provide activities that engage pupils' interest. They assess pupils' work regularly and accurately, ensuring that pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and the overwhelming majority make significant improvements in learning to manage their difficulties. Pupils feel extremely safe and secure, they enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning and support each other very well.
- The school is very well led and teachers' performance is managed effectively. The pupil premium is used to good effect in changing the grouping arrangements and making the curriculum more responsive to pupils' needs. There is a sustained focus on improving classroom practice and outcomes for pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Occasionally, teachers do not use questioning to best effect to ensure that learning of all pupils is of the very highest quality.
- Staff do not always make the best use of information about pupils' progress to check that pupils are doing as well as they can compared to national expectations of progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons, the majority of which were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with the school council, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, therapists and school staff including senior and middle managers.
- Inspectors took account of three responses to Parent View in planning the inspection. During the inspection the school’s analysis of its own questionnaire responses from parents and carers and pupils was used to provide a clearer picture of the views of parents and carers and pupils.
- The work of the school was observed and a range of documents were looked at, including the school’s own data on pupils’ past and current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Stuart Charlton, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Jackie Blount

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Vale School is a special school for pupils with a statement of special educational needs usually relating to profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many have associated severe learning difficulties and communication needs. The complexity of pupils' needs has increased significantly in recent years.
- The school operates from two main departments, a primary base at Lancasterian Primary School and a secondary base at Northumberland Park Community School, both of which are purpose built and on the same site as the mainstream schools. The Vale also operates inclusion schemes in partnership with Belmont Infant and Junior Schools and Northumberland Park.
- Most pupils come from culturally diverse families, with the largest groups coming from Black African, Caribbean or Turkish backgrounds. A range of other minority ethnic groups are represented; however, none of these groups is sufficiently large to provide statistically valid comparisons. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is very high compared to the national average.
- The school has been awarded the Investors in People Award and the status of Project Ability School for disability sports for the North London region. The school offers an outreach support service to teachers and pupils in mainstream schools.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2011 and since then there have been significant changes in the senior leadership team and the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that in all lessons teachers use questioning to best effect so that the learning of all pupils is of the very highest quality.
- Ensure that staff make the best use of information about pupils' progress to check that pupils are doing as well as they can compared to national expectations of progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils, including those from Black African, Caribbean or Turkish backgrounds, make good progress overall and they achieve well. The low, and often very low, starting points of all pupils mean that although their understanding, knowledge and skills are developed well, attainment for the majority remains low because of their difficulties. Challenging targets are set for pupils so that they achieve well irrespective of their disabilities, special educational needs, gender or ethnic origin.
- Many pupils, particularly those in the younger classes, use pictorial and visual strategies and signing to enhance communication. Generally, they apply these skills, and their numeracy and personal skills, very well across different areas of learning.
- On entry to the school, pupils' needs are very carefully assessed and the support required clearly identified. Pupils settle quickly into their new school due to the very high-quality support they receive from staff. Transitions are also managed extremely well so that learning is not disrupted.
- By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have learned the routines of the school day and have found out about themselves, their likes and dislikes as well as having an awareness of their bodies.
- By Year 6, pupils learn how to use pictures, signs and oral approaches to communicate, depending on their needs. They learn to recognise numbers and develop basic number concepts. Pupils make particularly good progress in developing their skills in communication and they learn to express their views effectively. Pupils' early reading skills and strategies are developed well with those pupils for whom it is appropriate. Nevertheless, by the end of Key Stage 2 their attainment in reading remains below average in spite of their good progress.
- By the end of Key Stage 4, many pupils are able to use writing skills to communicate and record their ideas. Others can use different support systems and prompts for a range of purposes. A majority use their reading skills for a range of purposes and many read simple texts for pleasure. They apply their developing skills in numeracy, including applying basic rules of number, in a range of different contexts in lessons.
- Throughout their time at Vale, the high emphasis placed on developing pupils' independence skills pays off and pupils leave with greatly enhanced social skills.
- Parents and carers report that they are very pleased with the progress their children make and their view is consistent with the inspection findings that all pupils make at least good progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Across the school, teachers have very good subject knowledge and are very effective in teaching pupils with complex learning difficulties. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and pupils receive extremely high-quality care, guidance and support, particularly to develop their confidence and independence. The seamless way in which teachers and support staff work together is integral to the success pupils achieve.
- Staff are very effective in building pupils' self-esteem and giving pupils the confidence to try new things, which makes an important contribution to the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Rigorous and robust systems to record pupils' progress have been developed, including observations and photographs of their achievements. These are used very well to inform planning to meet individual needs, and show that teaching and learning over time have been good. The school is very effective in helping parents and carers to understand and to support the learning needs of pupils with complex learning difficulties at home.

- Across the school, there are examples of outstanding teaching where staff set the highest expectations for every pupil and use a very wide range of teaching activities to ensure excellent outcomes for all. For example, in a Key Stage 3 food technology lesson the teacher used questioning very effectively to consolidate earlier learning about baking cakes and to develop pupils' understanding of food hygiene and product evaluation. She ensured that pupils used the technical language for the range of practical techniques they had employed and developed mathematical skills related to sharing and proportions. Pupils' learning was exceptionally well supported by the learning support assistants using pictures, signs and verbal strategies where appropriate.
- The recent emphasis on sensory skills development has raised the proportion of outstanding teaching across the school. In a small minority of lessons teachers do not always use sufficiently open-ended questioning to ensure that every pupil reaches their full potential.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school makes substantial improvements to the lives of pupils both at school and at home through developing positive attitudes to learning. Attendance is broadly average.
- The school's records and reports from parents and carers confirm the high quality of behaviour over time. The inspection took place very early in the new school year and even though there were instances when staff had to explain to pupils the school's expectations of behaviour, pupils responded to these well. Pupils say they make good friends in school and there is a calm and harmonious working atmosphere throughout. All staff receive extensive training in behaviour management techniques and use the behaviour management system effectively to ensure improvements in pupils' behaviour from when the pupils first start at Vale. Pupils are respected as individuals, and staff use praise and rewards to best effect to reinforce progress in personal and academic development. As a result, there have been no recent exclusions and, overall, pupils' behaviour is good.
- Parents and carers indicate that they feel their children are safe and secure at all times and that any type of bullying is extremely rare; records show that any such instances are dealt with appropriately. This view is supported by pupils. Staff devote a great deal of time to helping pupils to listen carefully to instructions and respond to the feelings of others.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher sets high expectations for staff and pupils. She has a very clear vision about how the provision should develop and is very well supported by the senior leadership team and other staff.
- Since her appointment the headteacher, backed by her newly-formed leadership team, has established a real sense of purpose across the school. Crucial to this is the high-quality teamwork which has been developed. The policies and strategies that have been introduced are having a very positive and immediate effect on improving pupils' performance across the school.
- The emphasis placed on the professional development of staff expertise ensures a cycle of improvement in classroom practice and an enthusiasm from staff about improving the way they meet pupils' needs, particularly for those with increasingly complex difficulties. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning ensures that performance management is effective, and full account is taken of national teaching standards. However, staff do not always use information about pupils' progress to check that pupils are doing as well as they can compared to national expectations of progress.
- Across the school, the curriculum is good and ensures systematic development of pupils' basic skills. It is broad and balanced and meets pupils' needs well. The Early Years Foundation Stage and primary provision place very high emphasis on developing pupils'

communication, literacy and mathematical skills through a topic-based approach, with pupils taught in class groups. In the secondary classes, the recent changes in the grouping of pupils to reflect need rather than age, and with each group having bespoke curriculum and accreditation arrangements, are proving to be extremely beneficial in raising achievement.

- The very wide range of lunchtime enrichment activities and the after-school clubs and activities are easily accessible to all pupils. These aspects of the curriculum are very effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The annual residential visits for Year 6 and Year 11 pupils are highlights in the school year and are much appreciated by parents and carers and the pupils themselves. The breadth of these activities and their accessibility demonstrate that the principles of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are at the heart of everything the school does. As a result, all groups of pupils achieve equally well.
- The multi-disciplinary support coordinated by the senior therapist and senior leadership team ensures that all pupils quickly receive the extra help they need.
- The new headteacher and senior leadership team and the changes in the governing body have brought about significant improvement to the provision and show that the school has good capacity to improve further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - the governing body challenges the school well and uses resources effectively. It ensures that policies and procedures, including those relating to safeguarding are of the highest quality and have a positive impact on the life of the school
 - performance management is rigorous and carefully linked to the professional development of all staff so that the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievements continue to improve even though the complexity of pupils' needs is increasing
 - the pupil premium is used very effectively to ensure that the outcomes for pupils continuously improve.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102176
Local authority	Haringey
Inspection number	402877
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vik Seeborun
Headteacher	Sarah McLay
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 February 2008
Telephone number	020 880 16111
Fax number	020 880 11140
Email address	office@vale.haringey.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

