

Valley Primary

Fallowfield Road, Solihull, B92 9HQ

Inspection dates 16–17 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The strong leadership and clear direction of the headteacher, effectively supported by her two deputies, have secured improvements in all aspects of the school's work.
- Teaching is good because teachers have an accurate understanding of what pupils already know and use this to carefully plan work that usually challenges and interests them.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is outstanding and enables pupils to make rapid progress and achieve well in reading.
- Children benefit from a positive start to their education because provision in the early years is good. Children learn quickly, gain in confidence and achieve well because of effective teaching and strong leadership.
- All groups of pupils now achieve well, including the most able, those who are disadvantaged or who have a disability or special educational needs and those pupils supported in the Additional Resource Centre, ARC.
- Pupils who attend the ARC are taught well and as a result of a clear understanding of their needs, make good progress. They are making particular strides in being able to make choices in their learning, without having to rely so much on additional support from adults.
- Pupils enjoy their lives in school. They behave well and work hard which helps them to make good progress in lessons.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. For example, they learn to respect others and understand the rights of people to exercise their own beliefs and cultures.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and are helped to understand risks both in school and the wider community.
- Governors make a valuable and effective contribution to school improvement. They set demanding targets for the headteacher and ensure that senior leaders have similarly high expectations of staff.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching of writing and mathematics is not as effective as that of reading. Pupils' progress in writing by the end of Year 6 and mathematics by the end of Year 2 is not as rapid as that in reading.
- A small number of pupils are absent too often.
- Leaders do not yet make best use of the most effective practice across the school to support and improve the teaching of other members of staff.
- Marking is not always used well enough to enable all pupils to understand how to improve their work further and pupils are not always encouraged to respond to comments from teachers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited all classes on both school sites. Three of these visits were carried out with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and examined workbooks for English and mathematics.
- Discussions were held with representatives of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a representative of a company used by the school to support its improvement. Interviews were also held with a group of pupils, senior leaders and middle leaders. A number of parents were interviewed on their way into school and while they were having lunch with their children. Two school assemblies were observed.
- The inspection team looked at the school’s documentation including: systems for protecting and safeguarding pupils, the school development plan, the school’s monitoring and evaluation files, records used by the school to check how well pupils were doing, minutes of the meetings of the governing body, records of behaviour and displays in classes and corridors.
- Inspectors analysed 44 questionnaires completed by staff and took account of the views of 47 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent view).

Inspection team

Gavin Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Derek Gardiner	Additional Inspector
Lynn Stanbridge	Additional Inspector
Timothy McGuire	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. Following Hatchford Brook Primary School being placed for a second time in special measures, the local authority, in consultation with governors and parents, merged the school with Valley Infant School. The headteacher of Valley Infant School became the headteacher of the new primary school in April 2014. The school remains on two sites which are just over half a mile apart.
- There have been eight changes of staff since the merger of the two schools.
- Children in the early years are educated in both Nursery and Reception classes, there being three of each. Children attend the nursery part time and the reception classes full time.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is broadly average. Pupil premium funding is for pupils in the care of the local authority and those eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is average.
- The school has an Additionally Resourced Centre, known as the ARC. This is managed by the Specialist Inclusion Support Service on behalf of the local authority. There are 13 pupils with speech, language and hearing difficulties who attend the ARC. These pupils attend mainstream classes when appropriate and they are included in the school's data on pupils' performance.
- The school has a breakfast and an after school club, managed by the school, which were looked at as part of the inspection.
- As this is a new school, there is currently no information available to assess if the school met the government's floor standards in 2014. These standards set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to further accelerate pupils' progress in writing by the end of Year 6 and mathematics by the end of Year 2 by:
 - ensuring that teachers enable more pupils to extend the range and purpose of their writing
 - providing more opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 1 to apply their skills in mathematical investigations and problem-solving tasks
 - ensuring that teachers consistently use their marking to enable pupils to respond to comments and identify their next steps in order to improve their work
 - using the best practice within the school to help other members of staff to improve their teaching.
- Ensure that the small amount of persistent absence is reduced further by continuing to support a small group of parents who do not send their children to school regularly enough.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management is good

- The steely determination and pursuit of excellence of the headteacher and her two deputies act as the catalyst for the wide range of changes and rapid improvements across this new school. Their successful leadership has created a culture in which the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' behaviour continue to improve.
- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The very detailed school improvement plan lays out clearly what is still to be accomplished, how this will take place and how the school will recognise the impact of the changes. The school has a strong capacity to continue this improvement.
- Strong leadership of subjects is leading to improvement in key aspects of the school's work, particularly in English, mathematics and special educational needs. The quality of teaching is consistently good but the excellent practice which exists is not always shared across the school and this prevents a few staff from experiencing an even wider range of ways to effectively teach pupils.
- The school guards against pupils falling behind as senior leaders have regular meetings with teachers to check on the progress being made by all pupils. This ensures that there is equal opportunity for all pupils to succeed.
- Assessment systems are being re-designed in line with national demands. Currently the school is trialling two different styles for checking pupils' attainment and tracking their progress. This is ensuring that staff have a clear picture of how to extend pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding even further.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is being used well by the school. Their personal and wider social development is supported effectively through their attendance at the school's breakfast and after school clubs and the wide range of sports clubs, visits and residential trips. This group of pupils benefits from the support provided by additional adults who provide one-to-one tuition and small group work. Consequently, the gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school, and all other pupils nationally, are closing.
- The schools' specialist provision for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, the ARC, is well-managed. As a result, pupils' needs are clearly and speedily identified. Pupils are supported well and make good progress in all aspects of their learning. Leaders effectively monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of these pupils whilst they attend the ARC.
- The breakfast and after school clubs are managed by the school and run by adults who know the pupils well. Pupils are not only provided with something substantial to eat but are given opportunities to play games, many of which help pupils to develop a range of skills, especially social skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good, leaders undertake a thorough analysis of its work in these areas, in order to make it even better. Pupils have a good understanding of different faiths and say that they understand how prejudice can lead to hate. They understand British values and learn about democracy, the rule of law, tolerance and respect.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively. Discrimination is not tolerated. The school's pastoral team provides strong support to a small group of pupils who find working alongside others difficult, enabling them to contribute fully during their lessons.
- A new curriculum is being planned effectively and implemented on a term-by-term basis. This enables leaders to evaluate its viability and success well as it is rolled out through the school.
- The primary sports funding is used effectively. Specialist sports coaches teach alongside the school staff which is further improving the quality of teaching in physical education. This funding is increasing pupils' participation in after-school and competitive activities, and has a positive impact on their understanding of

healthy lifestyles.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet requirements. The school makes stringent checks on staff and visiting professionals. A number of governors make regular visits to look at health and safety aspects across the school and are quick to put right any issues brought to their attention.
- The local authority provided strong support during the transition to the new school. This support is being gradually withdrawn as the school is very capable of continuing to improve its progress with fewer regular checks.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective and has made a good contribution to school improvement during a difficult transition period. The committee structure is well organised to enable governors to gather their own information and gain clarity of the issues facing the school. Governors are well-informed about national comparisons to school performance data as a result of effective training.
 - Governors fulfil their statutory and other roles with vigour and have successfully established their own processes for gaining information about the safeguarding of pupils.
 - Governors have a good range of skills and have undergone training to enable them to challenge the school and hold leaders to account. They come into school regularly to visit lessons, talk to pupils and check the quality of pupils' work. Governors know how good teaching is rewarded and any underperformance is tackled.
 - Governors are aware of the impact of pupil premium funding on the progress of eligible pupils and are aware of the positive impact of additional sports funding.
 - As well as supporting all aspects of school life, governors are keen to ensure that the school becomes the heart of the local community. It is clear that this long term goal has successfully begun.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is characterised by good attitudes to learning and positive responses to the high expectations of staff. Pupils clearly enjoy school.
- Most pupils behave well in their lessons and around the school. Pupils themselves recognise that behaviour is continuing to improve. They respond well to the school's rewards for working hard and say that this encourages them to behave well and work harder. The head boy and girl, who met with inspectors, are excellent ambassadors for the school.
- Those pupils who attend the ARC are able to work in a calm atmosphere because their behaviour is positive. As a result, little time is wasted in lessons and pupils get on well with each other when working in groups.
- Attendance is broadly average. The pastoral team support parents and help them to ensure that their children's attendance improves. While they have been successful with some families, they recognise there is more to do to reduce the small amount of persistent absence.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents support this view and are confident that the school is looking after their children well.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They understand different forms of bullying and the risks concerned with using the internet and new technologies. They acknowledge that sometimes even good friends fall out, and are confident that staff will help them to sort out any problems that might occur.
- The school provides good opportunities for pupils to help themselves keep safe. Examples of this are cycling proficiency sessions, discussions on the dangers of talking to strangers and understanding pupils'

own rights and responsibilities.

- Staff are trained in child protection, safeguarding and child health issues. The school uses effective systems to assess and record risks within the school and in outside activities. This ensures these aspects of school life are safe and promote pupils' understanding of their safety and general care.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is improving rapidly and is good across the school. This is recognised by parents, the local authority and other school improvement partners and demonstrated by the good progress made by pupils.
- Teachers have an accurate understanding of what pupils already know. They use this to carefully plan work so that it not only challenges but also interests pupils. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils used job vacancy advertisements enthusiastically to calculate weekly and annual wages, tax to be paid and hours worked. The well-considered questioning by the teacher helped to check pupils' understanding and deepen their learning.
- Teachers are highly successful in teaching reading, particularly in the early years, where the teaching of phonics and other early reading skills, is outstanding. Most pupils remember these skills and, as a result, attainment in reading is high.
- Teachers teach writing well most of the time. Pupils' work shows their accurate use of grammar, spelling and vocabulary. However, pupils are not always able to extend the range or purpose of their writing to enable them to reach higher standards by the end of Year 6.
- In mathematics, teachers encourage pupils to apply their skills in investigations and problem-solving tasks. This is generally successful but is yet to demonstrate a positive impact on the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support to individual and small groups of pupils helping them to make similar good progress to their classmates.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils during lessons is good and helps them to develop confidence in their ability to learn. However, teachers do not consistently follow the school's marking policy in all classes. Where it is most effective, pupils know where progress has been made and how their work could be improved further, but this is not always the case. Pupils are not always encouraged to respond to comments from teachers. Consequently, their learning is not always as rapid as it could be.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well from their starting points and are currently making rapid progress in reading and mathematics. The vast majority of pupils are working at the expected levels with a significant minority working above that.
- Children arrive at the school with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. They transfer from early years to Key Stage 1 having consolidated these skills well. They make good progress in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 which means that their attainment is above the national average in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- In reading, the effective start in the classes with the younger pupils is built upon well throughout the school. Pupils read frequently, widely and well. Many pupils are reading above the level expected for their age and they undertake extensive research for their topics and projects from a range of books and on the internet.
- There are examples of pupils' rapid progress from simple mark making to good writing in both early years

and Key Stage 1 classes. There is a strong emphasis on improving standards in writing in Key Stage 2, especially in Year 6, through concentrating on developing pupils' basic skills of spelling, handwriting and use of grammar. This has led to much better writing standards although sometimes at the expense of a wider range of writing opportunities. For example, pupils have not been given sufficient opportunities to apply these new skills to a wide enough range of writing activities in order to ensure that these skills can be regularly practised.

- Pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics is less marked than that in writing by the end of Year 2. Pupils complete a good amount of work during the year and the school has had a strong focus on filling gaps in pupils' understanding of how they might use their new found skills. There are many opportunities for pupils to carry out very practical problem solving, highlighted in the 'maths week', during the inspection. However, pupils' progress in mathematics by the end of Year 2 could be better.
- The most able pupils achieve well by the end of Key Stage 2. Workbooks in Year 6, from the end of last year and for the whole of the current year, show that big gains in knowledge, skills and understanding are being made because of good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils receive good support as a result of the funding made available for them and gaps are now closing rapidly. In reading, these pupils are now level with other pupils in the school and only half a term behind all other pupils nationally. In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils are level with other pupils in the school and about a term behind others nationally. In writing, pupils are one term behind their peers in school, but the gap with all pupils nationally is over a term. In each case the latest results show that the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others, both in the school and nationally, has narrowed. It is especially the case in reading where the gaps have virtually closed.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are provided for well by the school. Their needs are accurately assessed and programmes are put in place to help them to improve their skills. This is successful for all pupils, but is especially successful for those who have social and emotional difficulties. The part played by the staff pastoral team is key to this improvement. They are knowledgeable about pupils and their families and seek to help both. The pastoral team do this by listening carefully to pupils' concerns and discussing them with themselves and their families, then finding a successful outcome to enable the pupils to move forward in their learning.
- Pupils who attend the ARC are taught well and as a result of a clear understanding of their needs, make good progress. They are making particular strides in being able to make choices in their learning, without having to rely so much on additional support from adults.

The early years provision is good

- Leadership and provision in the early years classes is good. The work of the nursery classes has been revitalised by the appointment of a new early years leader and the work of the reception classes continues to improve.
- The school's own assessment information, seen in its regular checks on children's progress, shows that all children, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs, made good progress. A significant proportion of children exceed the national expectations by the end of their time in early years.
- Last year, the proportion of children reaching good levels of development, was just below the national figure. However, the evidence from this year shows clearly that this proportion is now higher than last year's national average. This is as a result of consistently good teaching.
- The teaching of phonics is outstanding. Not only does this give children a head start in their reading, but it stays with them throughout their time in the school, making reading the most successful subject across the whole school. For example, the proportion of pupils who passed the phonic screening test in Year 1, is now above the national average. This is an improvement on the previous year.

- Overwhelmingly, parents are supportive of what the school is doing for their children. They say they are well-informed about their children's progress and have ample opportunities to discuss any issues with the staff formally or informally.
- The activities set out for children on a daily basis, are exciting and challenge all groups of children. All aspects of the Early Learning Goals are covered by the school. However, in mathematics, adults do not always intervene and question children while they are working at their activities. Adults question children and promote their learning more successfully in all aspects of language development.
- Children are well-rehearsed in the routines of the day and moving between activities and lessons is smooth and orderly. Their behaviour is good and they are nearly always on task. Their social development is good and they are able to share, take turns and support each other in their learning. They make active choices for things they want to do and are supported and guided very carefully by adults.
- Children behave well and share apparatus fairly. The children are safe in the nursery and reception classes because staff care for them diligently.
- About a third of the current early years children are summer born. The school has worked tirelessly to help them make the rapid gains necessary to achieve expected outcomes for their age at the end of their time in early years. All children are well-prepared for the move to the National Curriculum in Year 1.
- Any gaps previously noted between boys and girls or other groups of children, have closed rapidly over the course of the year.
- The outside classroom encourages learning especially well. It is spacious and exciting. Children play and organise their own learning well in this environment. One child built a camp site, provided a sign which she taped to the fence and then created a pathway to a tree to climb. Staff supported this activity well with encouragement and discussions about language and vocabulary. As a result, the child learned new words, was able to spell a small range of words more accurately and improve her social development by inviting others into her camp.

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	104052
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	461972

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	640
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Grieves
Headteacher	Roberta Narroway
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2011
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