



Valley Infant School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 104052
Local Authority Solihull
Inspection number 286843
Inspection dates 19–20 September 2006
Reporting inspector Linda Rockey HMI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Fallowfield Road
School category	Community		Solihull
Age range of pupils	3–7		B92 9HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 7433175
Number on roll (school)	220	Fax number	0121 7223551
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	R Pascoe
		Headteacher	R Narroway
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001		

Age group 3–7	Inspection dates 19–20 September 2006	Inspection number 286843
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves a residential area of Solihull. Most of the children are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is lower than average, as is the number of children who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Children start part time in the nursery. Some have attended 'First Steps', a privately run on-site nursery which also provides an after-school club. 'First Steps' was inspected at the same time and will be reported on separately. There has been a significant turnover of staff in the last two years, including the appointment of a new headteacher two weeks before the inspection. The school has gained the Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the care given to their children. They say teachers know their children well, have high expectations and support them to achieve success. One parent commented: 'My child loves school – she can't wait to come'. Children really enjoy school; they attend regularly and on time, behave exceptionally well and have good attitudes to learning. This well-rounded education means that children leave school well prepared for their future lives.

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage, where planned activities are based on first-hand observations and there are strong links with parents and carers. Teaching is good throughout the school. Children thoroughly enjoy their lessons, engage well with activities and collaborate effectively in practical tasks. Learning assistants provide children with valuable support; they are skilled at encouraging children to keep working and not give up. Positive marking is used consistently and most children understand what they need to do to improve. The good teaching, together with well focused support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities, ensures that most children make good progress and standards are high by the end of Year 2. That said, more able children are not always stretched as much as they should be and the school has rightly identified the need to ensure a greater degree of challenge for them in every lesson. The school has satisfactory systems for tracking children's progress. It is aware that this information needs to be used by all staff to maximise rates of progress and to ensure there is appropriate intervention if any child is not making their expected progress.

The new headteacher has a positive presence around the school and her calm, authoritative manner is well received by children and parents. She has a clear vision for the school's future which she has begun to communicate very effectively to staff and children. The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness: staff and governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They recognise that the current system for monitoring teaching, learning and provision is not rigorous enough. The headteacher is well supported by a leadership team and she has empowered them to lead key developments. This means the school has a good capacity to improve further. Governors are very supportive and committed to the work of the school. However, they do not yet hold the school sufficiently to account.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment and tracking data more effectively to check whether all groups of children, particularly the more able, are making the expected progress and take swift action if they are not
- Develop a more systematic and rigorous approach to the monitoring and evaluation of performance and promote good practice across the school.
- Provide training and support governors to carry out their role and responsibilities as critical friends.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children join the school with skills and knowledge typical of three- and four- year-olds. They make a good start and achieve well by the end of the Foundation Stage because of the good teaching they receive. Children make exceptionally good progress in personal, social and emotional development because of the very strong emphasis adults place on helping children to settle in happily and know what is expected of them. Most, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 so that when they are formally assessed at the end of Year 2, results are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The children's personal development is good. One of the parents wrote to the inspectors: 'My eldest child has just left Valley...the school gave her the best start she could have had'. Children are polite and courteous. They are self-assured, articulate and confident to approach adults. This, together with good progress in their academic skills, prepares them well for life. Circle time is a positive feature in the school and its impact on children's personal development is very clear. In a Year 1 session, the teacher successfully modelled some appropriate responses to feelings. As a result, children were able to describe and talk about their own feelings. This led them to a growing understanding and appreciation of their own and others' emotional responses. Children know about the importance of keeping safe and living a healthy lifestyle. In the dining room, they were able to explain about healthy food. One said: 'Carrots are full of vitamins and yoghurt contains calcium'. They are also able to explain the importance of exercise and the need for water to make your brain work. Children are also aware of the needs of others. They take part in various fund raising and community events such as donating harvest food parcels to the Salvation Army and sending shoe boxes of toys to children in Europe through 'Operation Christmas'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because lessons are well planned, with an effective balance between adult-led and child-initiated independent work. In one lesson, children confidently organised their 'Plan and work'. They used their planning cards to make choices and used their initiative to complete a wide range of indoor and outdoor learning activities. The adults made good use of opportunities to assess through observation and direct, open questioning. Excellent relationships between adults and children encourage positive attitudes and an eagerness to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The themed curriculum is good, and is enriched well by planned trips and visits. Children talked enthusiastically about their current work on the seaside and recalled visits to the park and a museum. A Muslim parent came in to talk to children about prayer, and such activities support children's cultural development well. The football club, run after school by an external agency, is very popular with both boys and girls and usefully promotes regular exercise. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is satisfactory. Right from the start in the Nursery, children are encouraged to be independent learners. However, the outdoor learning areas are not being used sufficiently well to provide exciting opportunities for independent learning throughout the day and in all weather conditions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good in all aspects of school life. The school's welcoming atmosphere and concern for individuals mean that children feel safe and secure. Parents comment on the good induction procedures for new children and value highly the home visits which ensure a smooth start to school. Academic targets in child-friendly language are in place across the school and most children are able to discuss their targets and explain why they need them. Careful and effective attention is given to health and safety issues and child protection. There are effective links with external support agencies to safeguard the needs of the most vulnerable children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. There is a strong teamwork among the staff and newly appointed teachers have been inducted well. Having rightly identified the need to track the achievement of groups of children more effectively, the new leadership team already has plans to implement a new information and communication technology based system. Since the last inspection, the Foundation Stage leader has successfully tackled an area for improvement, introducing a shared language for discussing the assessment of children's learning. The two governors who met with the inspectors agreed they were not sufficiently informed about the school's performance to give the headteacher maximum challenge and support.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school.

Here is a list of the things we liked about your school

?You were polite, friendly and extremely well behaved. ?Your mums, dads and carers think that Valley is a good school and we agree with them. ?You enjoy school, come everyday and on time. ?Teachers encourage you to 'plan and do' your work. ?Adults care about you and make you feel safe. ?Circle time is fun and helps you to listen and take turns. ?Adults help you to have a healthy lifestyle.

These are the things that we think need to improve

- Teachers should check how much you are learning to make sure everyone is doing as well as they should.
- Teachers should watch each other's lessons more often and look out for ways of making lessons even better – you might have ideas for this as well.
- Your governors need to ask more questions about how the school is run.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.