

# Vale First and Middle School, Worthing

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125865
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	293385
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Collard

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	652
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Yogish Patel
<b>Headteacher</b>	A R Lovatt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2001
<b>School address</b>	Vale Avenue Worthing BN14 0DB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01903 872322
<b>Fax number</b>	01903 873681

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The Vale is a large school that has traditionally served the local area of Findon. Recently, more pupils have come from further afield and in some classes there are significant numbers who have joined during the year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average but slowly increasing. There is a small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. All pupils speak English fluently.

## 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 providing an effective education and it has some outstanding aspects. Teaching is good overall, with some examples of excellence. As a result, pupils achieve high standards by the time they leave Year 7 and are very well prepared for their future life. From a good position at the time of the last inspection, these standards have been maintained. Developments since then, particularly in terms of enhancing the quality of the curriculum and strengthening the roles of leaders, indicate an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Children start in the Reception classes with standards overall that are at or above those expected for their age. The very good termly assessments show good progress through the Foundation Stage so that by the start of Year 1 nearly all children have at least achieved the expected outcomes, and many do better than this. Through Years 1 to 7 pupils continue to progress well. Standards are above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. At this stage, significant numbers of pupils achieve above-average levels. High standards are maintained into Year 7, where many pupils are working at levels well above those expected. Nevertheless, national test data, confirmed by the school's own analysis, shows that progress in writing and, to a lesser degree, in mathematics is only satisfactory overall between Years 3 and 6 because some average-attaining pupils could do better. Pupils have the opportunity to excel in areas outside the core curriculum and there are clearly a number of talented artists, musicians, linguists and sportspeople.

The personal development of pupils is outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary for almost all pupils. They become increasingly articulate, join in activities with gusto and are able to question and debate in an increasingly mature manner. This is because of the excellent care, guidance and support systems in place. These are especially effective in supporting the small, but increasing, number of pupils with emotional, physical and behavioural difficulties. The excellent curriculum is well balanced. As a result, a wide range of learning opportunities is available in lessons and through other activities linked, for example, to art, the environment, drama, music and local studies. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to eat healthily and eagerly participate in a wide range of physical activities.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The strong leadership of the headteacher has developed strengths within all levels of management, including the governors. Consequently, individual expertise is utilised well so there is continuing refinement and challenge. More sophisticated analysis of assessment and a realistic evaluation of what it demonstrates have started to address the issues with writing and mathematics. Extra support groups have been started and general teaching over time is being analysed to raise the aspirations of both teachers and pupils. While this still needs to be fully embedded, the first signs of success can be seen in the improved rate of progress in Year 3.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Increase progress for average-attaining pupils in writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 6 to ensure they reach the highest standards that they can.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The achievement of pupils is good throughout the school and standards by Year 7 are high. While standards on entry are at or above the levels expected for their age, by Year 1 a number of pupils are working well above the levels expected, particularly in the creative, social and physical aspects of the curriculum, and speaking skills are good. Good progress in Years 1 and 2 means that in the 2006 national tests, Year 2 pupils achieved above average results in reading, writing and mathematics. Results in writing showed good improvement from 2005 because of the refinements in assessment and more focused teaching. A similar pattern is likely this year. Standards by Year 6 are well above average in English and mathematics. The higher ability pupils, of whom there are significant numbers, are not only good mathematicians but also confident and creative writers. Similarly, those in the lower ability range make good progress, with a number of them reaching at least the nationally expected level for their age. However, results show that some middle ability pupils only make satisfactory progress and improving this is the present school focus. As a result, some Year 3 pupils have made double the expected progress in less than a year. Standards continue to rise through Year 7, with even more pupils reaching standards above those expected for their age.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

All aspects of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, are excellent. Pupils' attitudes towards learning are exemplary. They talk very enthusiastically about their school and about the many opportunities they are given. They rightly say, as do many parents, that almost all behaviour is excellent, although there are a very small number of pupils who struggle to meet the high standards in this area. The 'Pupil Voice' group, having undertaken an extensive initial survey, found that a significant minority echoed these feelings. Since then, the school council has been instrumental in developing innovative solutions. These include a quiet friendship area where younger and older pupils can mix. As a result, a recent survey has seen a vast improvement. Almost all pupils say that they now feel safe and secure, and attendance is above the national average.

Different projects linked to cultural understanding and religious beliefs have been developed. The school tries to ensure that these involve first-hand experiences such as a trip to France to absorb the culture and try out newly acquired language skills. All of this, along with the high academic standards, ensures that pupils are very well prepared for what lies ahead.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is mostly good, never less than satisfactory, and there are instances of exemplary practice. All teachers plan thoroughly and provide interesting and very exciting methods to motivate the pupils. Work is generally appropriate to need and at its best provides very high levels of challenge linked to both age and ability. The recent topic on Pompeii was a good example of this. Pupils in different years worked on similar themes all geared towards their own age and ability. Less experienced teachers are well supported to ensure that they quickly become more competent. While individual lessons are taught well, there are differences in rates

of progress for different groups in Years 3 to 6. The school has been developing rigorous assessments and more comprehensive monitoring of learning over the longer term to determine the reasons for this. This has given the school an understanding about any relative weaknesses and enabled a closer focus on the progress of different groups. The highly aspirational targets set for next year indicate the staff's commitment to improved learning opportunities.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

A concentration on basic skills is balanced with a broad range of practical and creative activities, so fulfilling the school's aim of a well-rounded education. Visits are well planned to provide pupils with practical experiences, as are drama productions that are linked to work that has taken place in lessons. For instance, the recent production of a 50s-style musical was connected with a historical topic about these times. In the Reception Year, good opportunities are created to promote key skills. For instance, even as children were playing hopscotch, they were being taught to understand the sequencing of numbers. Sport figures highly in extra-curricular sessions, with professional coaches and clubs for those exhibiting particular talents. Pupils and parents rightly feel there are limited opportunities for younger pupils to participate in these, something the school is actively seeking to improve.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school knows its pupils extremely well. Marking by teachers is very thorough and pupils' individual targets are used to good effect. Pupils are effectively involved in this process through evaluating each other's work. The very good, open relationships were demonstrated by one pupil's comment, 'This is not Level 3 work because you have not included all the right things.' Extensive support for vulnerable pupils has been developed well to deal with an increasing number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Systems are rigorous, plans put in place to deal with specific problems and expert support provided if necessary. Nevertheless, the changing profile has provided some challenges. It has not always been possible to confirm how well new pupils have been doing academically and so it has been difficult to measure overall progress. The highly effective and realistic analysis of assessments is now giving the school the information to put effective support where it is needed.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The highly experienced and confident headteacher provides a very strong direction to the school's work and has high expectations of the leaders and managers. Nevertheless, these leaders feel empowered to take decisions and are encouraged to take full responsibility for their areas. This has enabled the school to maintain high standards, improve the quality of provision from a strong position at the last inspection and ensure that pupils continue to achieve well. Very good use is made of experts and agencies to provide an external perspective of the school's work, enabling a realistic view of its performance. Governors are very supportive but also feel part of the decision-making processes. They have a clear vision for the school's development and in a recent interview took the opportunity to make two appointments instead of one. These will enable the school to improve the teaching of physical education and also teach three European languages next year.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Vale First and Middle School, Vale Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 0DB

Thank you for making me feel so welcome during my recent visit. I very much enjoyed meeting so many of you and joining you in lessons. It was a shame that I did not get to meet most of you in Years 6 and 7 but I hope that you all enjoyed your trips. As I promised those of you I spoke to in Year 7, I am writing to tell you about some of the main points from my report.

- You told me how proud you are of your school and I can see why. It is a good school with some outstanding features where you are cared for well. You reach high standards by the time you leave and make good progress while you are at the school.
- You also told me that you thought nearly all of you behaved well and enjoyed school. Again I agree with what you say. I was particularly impressed with how some of you have looked at how behaviour could be improved and have made some suggestions that have helped change things.
- You wanted me to know how well you are taught and I can see this is happening from some of the exciting lessons I saw during the day. It was also confirmed when I watched the video that showed me some of the other wonderful things you do during the year. What an exciting curriculum you are given! I wonder how you manage to fit it all in.
- You have quite a number of clubs to go to and I know that your teachers are looking at ways to increase these, particularly for the younger children.
- Your headteacher leads the school very well and with the excellent support of everybody else knows what to do to make your school even better. I know they have been looking more closely at how some of you in Years 3 to 6 can make your writing and mathematics better than it is.

Finally I would like to wish you all the best for the future. You can play your part in helping things improve by continuing to work hard and behave well.

Yours sincerely

David Collard Lead Inspector