

Village Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101223
Local Authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	323425
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	306
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Kemp
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Layton
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ford Road Dagenham RM10 9JS
Telephone number	020 8270 6589
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an above average sized infant school. Almost half of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and a quarter are of Black African heritages, although few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of the pupils eligible for a free school meal is average and declining. The proportion of pupils who need help with their learning is above average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is through a part-time Nursery and three full-time Reception classes. The school has gained Healthy School Status and the London Schools Environment Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Village Infants' is a good and improving school. It has developed some outstanding features under the astute leadership of the headteacher. She is supported in driving improvement forward by the experienced deputy headteacher, an effective staff team and a strong governing body. Parents are delighted with the school. As one wrote, 'I always count my child as being very lucky to have a place at Village Infants' School.'

The focus on improving teaching and learning is a key factor in the school's success since the last inspection. Lessons are lively and interesting, but do not always extend the thinking of pupils or challenge the more able. The staff team are keen to reflect on their teaching and to seek ways of making it even better. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved and is now good. Children enter the school with skills that are below those expected for their age. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average and rising in all key areas, which represents good progress. This gives them a very secure foundation for success as they move on to junior school, although the school recognises that it needs to develop pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) more effectively.

From literacy and numeracy to music and gardening, the pupils' daily experiences are rich and rewarding. They greatly enjoy their lessons and being with their friends. Pupils of all backgrounds work and play happily together. They are considerate in their behaviour and value the diversity of cultures around them. They are also proud of their contribution to the life of the school and the community. Growing vegetables and plants in the garden gives them a great appreciation of the natural world and an acute understanding of the importance of maintaining a balanced diet for a healthy lifestyle. They understand the need to save energy and recycle waste to protect the environment. Their success has been recognised by the school achieving the London Schools Environment Award.

The high quality of the care and guidance means that the pupils feel safe at all times and can turn to have someone if they have a problem. The school has successfully focused on removing barriers to learning. Pupils who need additional help with their learning, and those who struggle with their language development, receive carefully targeted support so that they also make good progress. Rigorous action has led to improvements in attendance and punctuality, which are both now satisfactory. The school makes a valuable contribution to supporting families and helping the community to pull together.

Targets set by the headteacher reflect her ambitions for the pupils' achievement. These are challenging, and are met and often exceeded. The school is now using these to focus on increasing the number of pupils reaching higher levels by the end of Year 2. Pupils are clear about their own personal targets, particularly for their writing, and use these to improve the quality of their work. As one parent commented, 'I feel having clear targets has really helped my child to progress. He knows the expectations and is always proud to complete a target.'

There is a continual drive to seek further improvement. This is based on clear plans for action informed by a rigorous evaluation of the school's qualities. Staff and governors are quite aware of how they have secured recent improvements and of what they need to do to achieve their ambitious target of becoming an outstanding school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle and quickly develop key skills which enable them to make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes in all areas of their learning. As one parent said, echoing the views of many, 'my child loves school and always wants to go'. Children demonstrate high levels of independence because they have many opportunities to choose from a wide range of activities and to decide tasks for themselves. They communicate effectively with each other and talk happily to adults in the classroom, although adults sometimes miss opportunities to extend the children's speaking and enrich their language. Children are engaged in lessons and enjoy participating in group activities, with or without an adult. They work and play cooperatively throughout all classes. Singing is an integral part of their learning, and children participate with enthusiasm. They enjoy eating fruit and drinking water, and know this helps to keep them healthy. Children also know the basic hygiene reasons for washing hands, and one child was able to explain that he should not lick his knife when making a sandwich as his germs would go into the jar.

Adults work very well as a team and in support of one another. Assessment is thorough and used alongside the children's interests to plan enjoyable activities. Nevertheless, this information is not used sufficiently well to evaluate progress over time or the effectiveness of provision on the children's learning. The learning environment is well thought out in the Nursery to allow children to work inside and outdoors on many interesting and creative activities, whatever the weather. This is an area that the Reception teachers are keen to develop, and a canopy will be added shortly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers consistently extend the thinking of pupils through the better use of questions and by providing challenging activities for the more able.
- Embed the use of ICT to support the pupils' learning across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 build well on their good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. Their progress is improving in all key areas, and standards are rising. The trend in Year 2 test results is upwards since the last inspection. The 2008 results were above average, with mathematics slightly behind reading and writing. The 2009 unvalidated test results show that the gap has narrowed so that all areas have shown improvement since 2008 and standards are now above average overall. The programme to improve the reading of pupils who have fallen behind is a major contributory factor in them reaching these levels. The school is turning its attention to increasing the number of pupils working at higher levels as part of its drive to raise standards still further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils greatly enjoy school and are keen to say so. As one Year 2 pupil said, 'I actually think this is a good, good school.' They behave exceptionally well in lessons. All staff work hard to forge productive relationships throughout the school, and as a result, pupils trust the adults and feel safe. They are well aware of how to look after themselves and keep healthy and safe.

Pupils show respect for one another; playtimes are harmonious and enjoyable. They have a growing understanding of the world around them and are keen to help others through charity collections. The garden is a vibrant part of school life and promotes a deep understanding of the importance of sustainability. Pupils are rightly proud of their voice in the school, including the naming of 'Wonder Wednesdays'. They view the activities very positively and animatedly. All of these are contributing factors to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Transition is smooth, and pupils are well prepared for their next class or school because they have such positive attitudes and make rapid progress in developing basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Developments in teaching since the last inspection account for improvements in pupils' learning and their rising standards. The calm and well-organised classrooms support learning well. Pupils respond quickly to their teachers because they clearly understand the expectations for their work and behaviour. By sharing their intentions for each lesson, teachers make clear to pupils what they are to learn and why. Teachers also use individual targets well to focus the pupils on how they can undertake a piece of work successfully. They make lessons interesting by using new technology creatively and interactively so that pupils become involved in their learning. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of pupils who need additional help, particularly with their literacy and numeracy. There are some carefully planned examples where teachers adapt activities to extend the more-able pupils. Nevertheless, teachers do not always challenge and extend the thinking of pupils, particularly the more able, through their questioning and the activities they set.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has designed the curriculum with care to meet the academic and personal needs of all pupils. Programmes cater well for the development of basic skills of literacy and numeracy, which accounts for the pupils' good progress. The school is focusing on building a more creative curriculum. This links learning in subjects together and builds on the pupils' needs and interests, adding enjoyment to their learning. During the inspection, Year 1 pupils combined literacy with health education most effectively as they produced written instructions for hand-washing. The headteacher recognises that the next stage is to embed ICT more carefully now that the new computer suite is up and running. 'Wonder Wednesday' is one of many enjoyable learning experiences, along with drama, music and a wide range of clubs that extend the pupils' experiences and personal development. Partnerships, such as those with the local council for anti-litter campaign posters, have promoted the pupils' understanding of environmental and sustainability issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All adults are committed to supporting each pupil, irrespective of their starting point. Pupils feel safe and know what to do if they are troubled or concerned. Procedures for safeguarding the pupils' welfare are securely implemented. The school uses its detailed records to target support for pupils who find learning difficult or require help with their language development,

as well as those who have particular talents. The school is also able to demonstrate the beneficial impact of this action on the pupils' achievement. The headteacher and governors value the views of parents and pupils. They have conducted surveys, and as a result have implemented changes such as holding an information evening about homework. Academic guidance and marking are areas of very considerable strength in the school. Pupils know their targets, monitor their own progress, and are keen to achieve their goals and move on.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy give the school a very clear direction that has led to considerable improvements since the last inspection. They have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and very clear ideas about how it can improve. The targets that they set are challenging and have contributed to the pupils' good and improving progress. Other leaders provide another layer of valuable support and vision. They are increasing their impact on the performance of their colleagues and the achievement of the pupils. Governors know their school well. They play an active, challenging and supportive role, in addition to helping with future planning, although they do not always monitor sharply the impact of their policies on the outcomes for pupils. Staff and governors have a very clear understanding of the school's context. They plan carefully to provide valuable support to tackle any issues facing pupils and their families. The school has successfully evaluated its good contribution to community cohesion through dance celebrations, charity work and a multicultural week. These are positively supported by parents. Staff and governors are eager to involve them more in the school, and see this as an area where they can have an even greater impact.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

03 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Village Infants' School, Dagenham, RM10 9JS

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently, and for sharing your views with us. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers take very good care of you. You also take good care of each other. Well done. Your behaviour is excellent and those of you who have special jobs, like positions on the school council, carry out your duties responsibly.

You are part of a good school, which is getting better all of the time. You make good progress during your time in school, learning the skills you need for your future, and how to be mature and responsible people. This is because you are taught well and have interesting things to learn. The new library and computer room is a wonderful addition to the school. You have an excellent understanding of the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle, and you are clearly proud of the vegetables you have grown in the school garden. We are impressed by the care you show for the environment. You are gaining good skills that will stand you in good stead as you grow older.

The grown-ups in charge of your school manage it well. The two things we have asked them to do are:

- make lessons more challenging so that you can all learn as rapidly as possible
- provide you with more opportunities to develop your computer skills in all subjects.

I am sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make these improvements. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to show such pride in your school and enthusiasm for learning.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Martin Beale

Lead Inspector