

Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134944
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	328997
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	John Mason

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	175
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	Miss Lee Lambert
Headteacher	Mr Chris Spinks
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Gentry Place Norwich Norfolk NR5 8XZ
Telephone number	01603 742969
Fax number	01603 734914

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2008
Inspection number	328997

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Valley Primary School was established in September 2007 from the amalgamation of a first school and a middle school which shared the same site. Many of the children and current staff have remained through the reorganisation. The school is smaller than most primary schools and serves families from the immediate neighbourhood, which is an area recognised as being socially and economically disadvantaged. An above average proportion of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A very small but growing minority of pupils do not speak English at home, including a few pupils from refugee families. The school provides childcare before and after school which is managed by a private organisation. It runs a family learning programme for parents. The school holds the Active Sportsmark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Valley Primary School provides a satisfactory education. The clear direction, vision and commitment of the headteacher have guided the school well through reorganisation, with due priority being placed on the care of children and securing continuity in learning through the period of change.

The good level of care, guidance and support is the school's key strength. All staff share an awareness of the many social and educational issues affecting their pupils and a commitment to improving provision. The school works very well in partnership with others to ensure pupils' welfare and well-being. This includes liaison with the childcare before and after school and a range of good family support initiatives through the commitment of a skilled pastoral care worker. She shares the full confidence of pupils and parents in addressing any issue which may influence pupils' ability to enjoy and achieve at school. The school often invites engaging visitors to make presentations to open up pupils' horizons and puts on interesting trips which build friendships and develop pupils' experience of the wider world. Links through sports and a good gender balance in the staff, ensure positive male role models inspire boys, helping them, against the national trend, to out-perform girls by the end of Year 6. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They really enjoy school and develop a good understanding of healthy and safe ways of living. However, attendance is well below average, despite intensive efforts to work with families to improve this, and not all pupils behave well without the support and intervention of adults.

All teachers set clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and plan secure lessons which stimulate their enjoyment in learning and establish good routines. However, because lesson activities are too often directed by the teacher, pupils only develop limited independence in their learning and this holds some back from making the progress they could. Because teaching overall is satisfactory, pupils in all key stages make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Results in national tests for 11 year-olds in 2008, while average, were the best over five years of steady improvement. Science results were particularly good, but girls' performance in mathematics was below average. In Key Stage 1 standards are below average, particularly in reading.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Middle managers have yet to exercise full responsibility for their subjects across the whole school to drive up standards and develop creative links between different areas of the curriculum. They do not yet contribute fully to the school's evaluative process. The curriculum is satisfactory. The recent introduction of a new system to help children recognise letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) is well gauged to help address weaknesses in reading. The governing body provides satisfactory support. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve and enjoys the overwhelming approval of parents.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children settle into Reception well because their induction is good. Staff quickly establish helpful routines, setting clear expectations and creating an environment where children feel secure and ready to learn. Classrooms are bright and spacious and resources give children the opportunity to follow their own interests as well as working closely with an adult. Many show enjoyment in their learning, for example when baking cakes or moving to music during a physical

education session. Staff take good care in attending to children's welfare needs and this has a good impact on their personal and social development. Satisfactory teaching and support ensure that children make satisfactory progress overall but many do not reach the levels expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1. Staff recognise the need to extend children's speaking skills, use of language, reading and writing skills and are currently introducing phonics to improve provision. The curriculum ensures that children have experience of all the recommended areas of learning. The outside play provision is safe but planning does not indicate how learning in all areas will be developed outside on a day-to-day basis. Regular observations are made of children and used to build up a profile of their learning. This indicates areas of weakness in the children's emotional and language development, especially of boys. Inconsistencies in assessment limit the quality of planning. For example, the school recognises that assessments of reading in 2008 were too high. Management and leadership are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by engaging girls more thoroughly in their learning.
- Improve the quality of learning by broadening styles of teaching and the range of activities in class.
- Embed the new phonics course thoroughly, so that pupils have the literacy skills to access a wider ranging curriculum.
- Extend the role of subject leaders, so that they have greater accountability for their subject areas in driving up standards across the school, especially in Key Stage 1.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter Year 1 with skills and knowledge below national expectations. In particular, children are below levels expected nationally in their emotional development and language skills. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards are still below average. Standards in reading are well below average. The proportion of pupils attaining level 4 and level 5 in national tests in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science has increased year on year for the period 2004-2008. Results in 2008 were broadly average, with more level 5 passes in science than nationally. Girls did markedly less well than boys in mathematics. Having started Key Stage 2 close to average, pupils made satisfactory progress. The current Year 6 are also making satisfactory progress, although they entered Key Stage 2 with lower standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language, also make satisfactory progress at all stages in their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory and often good when pupils are fully engaged in lessons or assemblies. Some pupils are boisterous at play and around the school, and rely on members of staff to check their behaviour. Pupils know that bullying and racist behaviour are unacceptable and are confident that any occasional incidents are dealt with firmly and fairly. They like to take on responsibilities around the school and respect and value the school councillor and peer mediator schemes.

Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the wider community through, for example, involvement in a local gardening project and raising money for charities. They take regular exercise through good involvement in formal sporting activities, many attending sports clubs too. Visits to local places of interest, including residential visits, impact well on their spiritual and social development. Pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of beliefs and ways of life different from their own and pupils with different linguistic backgrounds are made to feel welcome. Attendance remains well below average due, in part, to families who continue to take holidays in term time. Through intensive support and reward for good attendance, the school is successfully addressing absence which results from the difficult home circumstances some pupils experience. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education and beyond, improving their social and communication skills as they progress through the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy their learning because teachers manage the needs of individual pupils well in the vast majority of lessons. Pupils respond well to the good humour and clear expectations of their teachers. Routines are mostly well understood and contribute well to the continuity of learning. In the best lessons activities are well paced and challenge all pupils to work hard and thoughtfully. However, some lessons are too directed by the teacher and do not encourage pupils enough to take responsibility for their own learning. When teaching does not use a wide enough range of activities or styles of delivery pupils become passive, not actively engaging in their learning. Lesson planning is satisfactory but the focus of lessons is not always linked robustly to assessment practice. Harder extension tasks are not consistently given to extend the learning of the more able pupils who finish work before others. Pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities are given good support to develop attitudes and dispositions suited to making sustained progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Staff are beginning to adapt the Year 1 curriculum to meet the needs and capabilities of children who do not reach the level expected for their age when entering Year 1. The development of a whole-school approach to literacy is starting to promote better progress in reading and writing. The introduction of a new system of teaching phonics is a direct result of good analysis of pupils' needs and identification of how to address them. Setting of pupils in classes of similar ability helps staff to match tasks more readily to pupils' capabilities in order to raise standards. Teaching of subjects around a topic to make pupils' learning more relevant and interesting is becoming better established, and plans to incorporate information and communication technology (ICT) into all subjects are developing well. French is taught in Years 4 to 6, although it is still in its early stages of development. Additional provision for gifted and talented pupils is limited. Visits, including residential experiences and other additional activities such as popular clubs and theatre workshops extend pupils' learning as well as promoting their confidence and self-esteem.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff show a high level of commitment to encouraging pupils' enjoyment of school and to their welfare. Procedures for keeping pupils safe are robust. Systems for identifying and acting on pupils' concerns are good and effective action is promptly taken. Help for those pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities is good. Good systems for tracking pupils' progress enable staff to identify weaknesses and promptly provide effective additional support. Suitable catch-up programmes are organised for those who are falling behind. All pupils have targets in literacy and numeracy and these are beginning to have a positive impact on improving pupils' progress. Teachers' marking is not yet fully effective in identifying what pupils have done well or in providing good guidance on how they can improve their work. Good procedures for monitoring attendance and for following up absences are beginning to raise attendance, particularly of the more vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Staff respond well to the headteacher's good leadership. They are clear about their roles and committed to the school's further development. However, subject leaders have yet to develop confident skills and understanding in all phases of primary education. This is because they had only limited experience prior to amalgamation. The financial management of the school is sound and the head has used public, business and charitable funding initiatives very well to enhance opportunities for pupils. Consequently, the school is able to promote equal opportunities well and pupils, whatever, their background or specific difficulties, are happy in the school. Provision to promote pupils' understanding of local, national and global communities is satisfactory. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and recognise the need for further training to help them take a more active role in shaping the direction of the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

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

1st October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Valley Primary School, Norwich, NR5 8XZ

Thank you very much for being so helpful when Ms Frith and I visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out what you like about school.

We were particularly impressed by the way you get on with one another to help you enjoy school. The staff make a really big effort to help you to feel safe and enjoy school. It was good to see you responding so well to these efforts by taking on duties around the school and behaving in class, in play and in assembly. It helps you get the most from your teachers. Your teachers help you to enjoy lessons through their good humour and by checking your behaviour well if your concentration lapses. We were really pleased that you do so well in science by the end of Year 6, but were concerned that it takes many of you a long time to reach expected standards in reading. We were also impressed by the way you make friends with new pupils who often have little English, and understand the difficulties that some pupils have in learning well and behaving appropriately.

You and your parents tell us that Mr Spinks has led the school well through the change to being a primary school. We agree with this and, like Mr Spinks, recognise that now the school has found its new identity it can do several important things to help it to keep on improving.

We have asked your teachers to work on the following things:

- Improve your reading and writing skills, so that you can do some learning on your own about things that interest you.
- Help you all, and particularly girls, to get better at mathematics
- Develop ways of teaching which enable you to take more responsibility for improving your own learning
- Develop their skills in organising the subjects you do to help you learn better

You can play your part in helping bring about some of these improvements by reading as much as you can, the girls trying extra hard at maths, and everyone continuing to concentrate well in class. Thank you for your help. We wish you every success at school and in all other aspects of your lives.

Yours sincerely,

John Mason

Lead inspector