

The Vale Primary School

84-92 Beaconsfield Road, Langley Vale, Epsom, KT18 6HP

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress across the school.
- Pupils' attainment has risen sharply since the previous inspection. It is now above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Good teaching helps pupils to learn quickly. Work is engaging and motivating. Pupils learn without fear of failure.
- Pupils are proud of the school and are good ambassadors for its work. They behave well and are friendly, sociable and articulate. They feel safe and are kind to each other.
- Work in and out of lessons as well as numerous visits and clubs provide pupils with many exciting experiences. These contribute successfully to pupils' great enjoyment of school.
- Good leadership and management have helped the school to improve quickly over the last two years.
- Well-targeted initiatives have ensured that weaknesses in mathematics have been eradicated. There is much more good teaching than in the past because teachers have been given clear guidance about how to improve.
- The co-headteachers work together very effectively. They have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what still needs improving. They are supported well by other staff.
- The governing body is knowledgeable about the school. It provides good challenge and support to other leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Pupils' good knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) is not always reflected in accurate spelling. Spelling skills are not taught systematically enough and pupils are not given sufficient guidance to help correct errors.
- Just occasionally, work is too easy for more-able pupils, slowing their progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons, of which around half were observed jointly with the co-headteachers. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to lessons.
- Discussions were held with pupils, members of the governing body, members of staff and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 74 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspectors also read letters from parents and carers and talked to some at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and heard some pupils read. They looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress, planning and monitoring documents, and the school development plan. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding information and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed 24 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Mike Capper Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Allan Barfoot

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is very low. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has co-headteachers who each work for three days every week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' spelling by:
 - ensuring that skills are taught more systematically
 - giving pupils clear guidance about how to improve their spelling.
- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by ensuring that the work given to more-able pupils is not too easy for them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' attainment has risen since the previous inspection with national test results at the end of Year 6 in 2013 being the best for several years. Pupils now make good progress across the school and attainment is above average by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. When children start school, most are working at typical levels for their age. They improve skills quickly in the Reception Year. Children's knowledge of phonics is strong. This is reflected in the high percentage of pupils that reached or exceeded the expected level in the national phonics screening checks at the end of Year 1 in 2013.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. By Year 6, pupils confidently solve complex mathematical problems. They read widely for a range of purposes and write at length in English and for other subjects. However, pupils' good phonics knowledge is not always reflected in accurate spelling. This is a weakness in otherwise good quality written work.
- The school ensures that all pupils do equally well, although just occasionally work is too easy for more-able pupils. Nonetheless, more-able pupils make good progress most of the time. For example, over half of the pupils in the current Year 6 are already working more than two years ahead of the expected level for their age in English and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress as others. Good quality support helps them to learn quickly, with most of these pupils reaching the expected level for their age by the end of Year 6.
- There are too few pupils who are supported through additional government funding to comment on their attainment without identifying them. They are given well-targeted help that focuses sharply on developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This ensures that, across the school, these pupils make good progress, with the gap between their attainment and that of their classmates closing quickly.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan work that is engaging and motivating. Pupils are willing to 'have a go' at new things because they know that teachers will help them if they go wrong. High-quality displays help pupils to be proud of their achievements.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught well. Teachers have good expectations of what pupils should achieve and they make learning interesting. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their pupils' needs because they have good procedures for checking their learning. For example, they hold a half-termly meeting with each pupil to talk to them about their work and their behaviour. This detailed understanding of the needs of pupils means that teachers are able to plan work that provides the right level of challenge most of the time although, just occasionally, some work is too easy for more-able pupils.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching helps children to acquire new skills quickly. Adults often link work to a central theme so that it can build on children's interests and makes learning purposeful. For example, following a visit from the fire service, children quickly improved a range of skills as they wrote about firemen, painted pictures and made models and acted out stories.
- Work since the previous inspection on improving the quality of feedback given to pupils has been very successful. Consequently, pupils are very clear about the next steps in their learning and usually take good account of feedback to improve their next piece of work. However, teachers give pupils too little guidance about how to improve their spelling. Consequently, pupils sometimes repeat spelling mistakes because they have not been shown what they have done wrong.
- Across the school, teaching assistants have a good effect on pupils' learning, especially when

working with disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs. Teaching assistants are well informed. They support pupils sensitively so that they do not become over-reliant on adult help.

- The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View are pleased with the teaching of their children. They support teachers well by helping their children with homework and hearing them read.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' great enjoyment of school is seen in above average rates of attendance. Pupils behave well all of the time.
- School logs show that misbehaviour is very rare. This is because pupils understand how important good behaviour is to their learning, with one commenting, 'If we aren't sensible, we won't learn.' Pupils are especially positive about the school's reward system (the power gems). They feel this helps them to improve both their work and their behaviour.
- There is a happy and purposeful atmosphere in class. Pupils are attentive and support each other well. They are proud of their school and work hard most of the time, although just occasionally some do not make enough effort to present their work neatly.
- The school promotes good relationships and tackles discrimination robustly. Playtimes are calm and harmonious, with pupils of different ages playing together happily. Pupils use play resources very sensibly and take good care of the school building.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Work in areas such as cycle training and e-safety ensures that pupils learn how to stay safe. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the potential pitfalls of using the internet and they know how to avoid cyber bullying.
- Pupils are very clear that in school there is only very occasional bullying or 'falling out' but when it happens it is 'sorted out very quickly.' This is supported well by the school's 'bullying ambassadors' who monitor behaviour closely by, for example, carrying out an annual survey to ensure that everyone feels safe.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders acted decisively after the previous inspection and they have ensured good improvement in all areas. This process has been led exceptionally well by the co-headteachers. Their high expectations are shared by all staff. Together, they have ironed out inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The local authority has given good support to secure these improvements.
- Teaching has improved because the co-headteachers will not accept second best for their pupils. Teachers are set sharp targets for improvement and these are followed up regularly by leaders. Good use of training in areas such as 'assertive mentoring' (a new arrangement that involves teachers meeting half termly with each pupil to talk about their work) have had a highly positive effect on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.
- Middle leaders such as those in charge of Key Stages 1 or 2 are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They play a good part in checking pupils' learning and securing improvement. Leaders at all levels have a good understanding of remaining priorities. They are now focusing on ensuring that recent initiatives are secure and on building a stronger partnership with parents and carers so that they all have a positive view of the school and its recent successes.
- The school focuses well on developing pupils' healthy lifestyles and physical well-being. Pupils grow their own food and participate successfully in sporting competitions. The new sports funding provided by the government is used to good effect to bring in skilled coaches from elsewhere. This is helping to improve further participation rates in physical activity as well as teachers' skills. The impact of spending is monitored carefully by leaders to ensure that it is

providing value for money.

- The topics and subjects taught help pupils to develop good literacy and numeracy skills, although spelling is not taught as systematically as other aspects of writing. Clubs, visits and activities in lessons contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The 'Vale Values' focus successfully on developing attributes such as manners, kindness and respect. Pupils leave school as well-adjusted, happy and confident individuals who have been well prepared for the next stage of their education.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body provides good support and challenge to other leaders. Governors have made judicious use of training in areas such as how to analyse school data on pupils' attainment and progress to improve their skills. They have also established their own rigorous systems for checking things for themselves. For example, they regularly visit school to talk to staff and pupils or to visit lessons. This has helped to improve their understanding of how well the school is performing in comparison with others. Governors know about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and how it is being improved. They ensure that only good performance is rewarded financially. They monitor closely the use of additional government funding to ensure that it is being used to good effect to help the small number of eligible pupils attain as well as others. Governors ensure that procedures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements.

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	131991
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	442479

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Matthews
Headteacher	Claire Regnard & Caroline Christer (co-headteachers)
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 October 2012
Telephone number	01372 273639
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