

Valence Primary School

Bonham Road, Dagenham, Essex, RM8 3AR

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| Inspection dates | 18–19 November 2014 | | |
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Early years provision | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including in the Nursery class for children with severe and complex learning difficulties.
- Pupils' attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Pupils across the school make good progress and as a result their achievement is good.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary because teachers and other members of staff form excellent relationships with the pupils and motivate them to want to learn.
- Pupils feel exceptionally safe at school and know how to stay safe from various hazards.
- Teaching is good in all year groups. Teachers plan activities that are purposeful and relevant to the pupils.
- Outstanding leadership and management from the headteacher and other leaders ensure that this school continues to improve rapidly towards outstanding.
- Provision for pupils across the two school sites is managed exceptionally well, despite the constant growth in staffing and pupils.
- The impact of leaders and managers, including governors, on teaching and pupils' achievement is outstanding.
- Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of high quality. As a result, pupils are very polite and respectful, and thoroughly prepared for life in modern Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Pupils do not all do as well as they could in writing. This is because they do not always take enough notice of teachers' marking or check and correct their mistakes quickly enough.
- In some classes and ability sets, teachers do not always make sure that the most able pupils are given hard enough work throughout a lesson.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with the headteacher or a senior leader.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers, pupils and members of the governing body. A discussion was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team took into account the 48 responses to the online survey, Parent View, a letter from a parent or carer and held informal discussions with a number of parents and carers.
- The inspection team considered the views expressed in the survey responses from 69 members of staff.
- A range of information supplied by the school was scrutinised, including; the school’s own information about how well pupils are doing; planning documents; checks on the quality of teaching; the school development plan; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

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|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Alison Cartlidge, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Sarah Lack | Additional Inspector |
| Fatiha Maitland | Additional Inspector |
| Jenell Chetty | Additional Inspector |
| Milan Stevanovic | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Valence Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school and is split over two sites, over a mile apart.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage there are three part-time, morning and afternoon Nursery classes, one being for 16 children with severe and complex learning difficulties. In addition there are five full-time Reception classes.
- Pupils have a very diverse range of ethnic heritages. The large majority are White British, of other White background or of African origin. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language and pupils at the school have over 50 different home languages.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average at one in 10 pupils. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is increasing rapidly, particularly in the lower school.
- There has been a constant change in teaching staff since the previous inspection because of a considerable increase in the number of pupils year on year. In addition, more pupils than usual join the school during the school year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that pupils learn as quickly in writing as they do in reading and mathematics, by ensuring that they always:
 - follow the advice given in teachers' marking
 - check their work and correct any mistakes they have made.
- Ensure that teachers always adjust the work set during lessons when it is clear that it is too easy for the most able in their classes or ability sets.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders and the governing body provide outstanding leadership for this good and continually improving school. The school's experienced and respected headteacher provides very strong direction. All members of staff are keen to emulate her high expectations.
- The headteacher has ensured that the school has continued to develop quickly over the last three years, and the changes in teaching staff and continued increase in pupil numbers have been managed exceptionally well. Consequently, both school sites are calm, there are shared values and the standards expected of teaching and pupils' learning are high.
- The systems for monitoring the work of teachers are very clear and robust. Teachers have targets that are checked rigorously and members of staff feel that they are given effective support to help them develop as professionals. Since the previous inspection, teaching assistants have become more effective in the way they support pupils.
- Leaders have a very thorough knowledge of the strengths of the school and know what needs to be done for the school to become outstanding.
- The school promotes equal opportunities rigorously; members of staff form excellent relationships with the pupils and tackle discrimination robustly.
- Pupils who are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium receive good one-to-one and group support in the subjects where they do less well than others at the school. Members of staff also provide advice and support for specific families.
- The additional funding to improve physical education and sport has been used wisely to provide specialist teaching and training. As a result, there has been an increase in pupils' interest in clubs and sporting competitions.
- The school has developed new subject plans and these are in place alongside rigorous systems for monitoring how well pupils are doing. Subjects are taught in an interesting and meaningful way. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a significant strength of the school's provision, preparing pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils in Year 6 showed empathy towards the life of soldiers when they wrote letters about experiences of war, and pupils understand that bullying is hurtful.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Members of staff are checked for their suitability and are trained to keep pupils safe.
- Parents and carers are positive about the school. They are especially pleased with the way that pupils behave and the progress that their children make.
- The local authority provides the right 'light touch' support for this school and leaders are satisfied with the additional support they have requested.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective, and provides strong support and challenge for the school. The school's key strengths and plans for improvement are fully understood. Governors know how the school monitors teaching and makes sure that good teaching is rewarded and weaker teaching tackled. Governors have a thorough understanding of the information on how well teachers and pupils are doing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have highly positive attitudes towards learning and show great pride in their work and appearance. They get on very well together and develop very productive relationships with members of staff. They are courteous, considerate and extremely positive about behaviour at the school. As one pupil rightly pointed out, 'Behaviour is exceptional.' Parents and carers are also positive about behaviour at the school.
- Pupils' attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now above the national average.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility in school and older pupils belong to various leadership teams. For example, they help others with computing, mathematics, sport and at lunchtimes. They also take part in an eco-club to promote an awareness of our responsibility for the health of the planet.
- Pupils are very tolerant and respect each other's cultural differences and beliefs. They are keen to help

each other in lessons. For example, in computing in Year 5, pupils helped each other to take photographs using various special effects.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe at school and are happy with the way that rare instances of bullying are dealt with. They know what to do if they have any concerns and are confident that swift action is taken when needed. One pupil was pleased to note that, because an issue is handled well, 'it only happens once'. Pupils displayed very mature responses to the messages given in an anti-bullying assembly.
- Most parents and carers are happy that their children are kept safe at school and one parent or carer went as far as saying, 'I give the school 10 out of 10 for keeping my children safe and secure.'
- Pupils know how to stay safe, including when they are using the internet. They can explain why certain situations may be a hazard. For example, they suggested 'leaves on the playground' as a possible reason for pupils slipping over.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers and teaching assistants work well as a team and form very strong relationships with the pupils. They ensure that the work they set is interesting and relevant, enabling the pupils to concentrate well and want to learn. For example, Year 6 pupils were interested in researching the Ebola virus by reading various articles.
- Teachers' clear explanations about what pupils are to do and learn in lessons enable them to start their work promptly and not waste time.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are secure in their subject knowledge and share it with the pupils effectively. Questioning is used well to check pupils' learning and their work is frequently marked. For example, in Year 3, the teacher and a teaching assistant asked groups of pupils effective questions to check their understanding of the books they were reading.
- Pupils understand the school's pink and green marking policy, and teachers provide helpful guidance on how pupils can improve their work. As one pupil in Year 6 said, 'I read what my teacher writes about my work and I know what I need to do to improve.' However, pupils do not always take heed of this guidance soon enough and consequently there are occasions when they repeat mistakes.
- Teaching has had a positive impact on pupils' literacy, reading and mathematics. In most lessons, teachers provide work that is well suited to the pupils' different abilities. Occasionally, the most able within a class or ability set are not set hard enough work; when this happens they do not learn as quickly as they could.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that when they enter Year 1 their attainment is broadly in line with national expectations.
- Year 1 pupils do well in the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening check and are able to attempt new words when they are reading.
- Pupils' levels of attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6 have been rising further over the last three years. They are above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6, with mathematics being the strongest subject. Pupils make good progress across the school leading to good achievement overall.
- Pupils read fluently, with good expression, and enjoy talking about the characters and events in the stories they have read. Pupils in Year 2 use their phonics knowledge to help them read unfamiliar words and enjoy belonging to the 'Bug Club' that promotes reading.
- In mathematics, pupils are taught in classes according to their ability. There are consistent approaches to teaching the subject and pupils know what strategies they can use to help them carry out calculations. While this has led to pupils' rapid progress over time, occasionally the most able pupils within an ability set are not challenged enough. Consequently, they do not always work at the levels of which they are capable.
- Pupils' progress is slower in writing than in reading and mathematics. Although pupils' handwriting has improved since the previous inspection, and they take great care over the presentation of their work, they do not always check their work for mistakes. Consequently, pupils sometimes make avoidable errors in spelling and grammar which they do not correct quickly enough.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good and often better progress, especially in reading and mathematics. They are given extra help in lessons and additional resources to support their

learning when needed. Children in the Nursery class for children with severe and complex learning difficulties also make good progress.

- Pupils who speak English as an additional language do well because there is a strong emphasis on speaking and sharing vocabulary, including on wall displays. Members of staff and other pupils are keen to provide support in lessons.
- The most able pupils do well over time although occasionally, especially in writing, they are not challenged enough.
- Pupils eligible for additional funding make good progress from their starting points. In 2014, these pupils in Year 6 were about a year behind other pupils at the school in mathematics and two terms behind in reading and writing. They had caught up with other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy their physical education lessons and additional new sports activities. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 2 were tangibly developing their skill in balancing, throwing and catching. These activities help them to reach the levels of physical performance of which they are capable.

The early years provision

is good

- The large majority of children are working below the levels typical for their age when they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Children make good progress from their differing starting points in the Nursery class for children with severe and complex learning difficulties. Work is tailored to match their individual needs and they do especially well in personal development and literacy.
- Children also make good progress in the other Early Years Foundation Stage classes. They settle quickly because activities are well organised. Teachers and other members of staff are well trained and know how to work with young children.
- The quality of the provision, including teaching, in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There is a good emphasis on the development of pupils' reading, writing and numeracy. For example, in the Reception Year, children working with an adult were making use of their knowledge of phonics to help them write simple words. However, children do not always remember what they have learned when writing independently and occasionally activities provide limited challenge for the most able children.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding. They are very motivated to learn and show a broad interest in all activities. They feel very safe at school and the classrooms and outdoor areas have a calm, purposeful air. Children are confident, make choices about their learning and concentrate very well. The family trees in the Reception Year enable children to display photographs of their families to help form links between home and school. Children are keen to offer each other praise in the form of a 'whoosh' for good work.
- Information gained from the robust checking of children's learning is shared well with parents, carers and the children. As one child said when working on the climbing frame, 'I couldn't do this yesterday, but I can today.'
- Early years leaders have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They ensure that training is in place as necessary so that children in all classes can be assured of the same high-quality experience. Children are prepared well for joining Year 1.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 101222 |
| Local authority | Barking and Dagenham |
| Inspection number | 449713 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,151 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Frances Bowman Watson |
| Headteacher | Elizabeth Chaplin |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17–18 March 2010 |
| Telephone number | 020 8270 6872 |
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