

Valewood Primary School

Sherwood Avenue, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside L23 7YG

Inspection dates

14–15 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school lives up to its motto of 'valuing personal strengths'. Pupils thrive in a calm and nurturing environment. Leaders, governors, staff and pupils alike are rightly proud of their school.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. As a result, they are able to identify where further support and challenge is required in order to help pupils to be even more successful.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is very effective. Staff are well trained to meet the diverse range of pupils' needs in school.
- Pupils make good progress across the school and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge to ensure that a high proportion of pupils reach the higher standard at the end of key stage 2.
- Achievement for current pupils is stronger in reading and mathematics than in writing. Pupils do not routinely apply their good knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling to their written work.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad, balanced and creative. It is planned well to enable pupils to gain skills and knowledge across a wide range of subjects.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge ensures that learning activities are planned well to meet the needs of pupils and excite their interests.
- The positive relationships between staff and children in the early years contribute to the good progress that children make. Children are well prepared to join Year 1.
- Pupils take good care of each other. Exceptional attitudes to learning and respectful relationships between staff and pupils underpin pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils feel valued and make a strong contribution in the decisions made about their school.
- Parents and carers praise the care and guidance that their children receive. Parents consider the school to be a caring community which has the well-being of children at its heart.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers provide greater challenge, particularly for the middle-ability pupils, to increase the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher standard by the end of key stage 2.
- Ensure that pupils routinely apply their grammar, spelling and punctuation knowledge in their writing in order to accelerate rates of progress in writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's commitment and passion for pupils to succeed, regardless of their ability or learning need, permeates throughout the school. Staff and governors embrace her vision. This explains the highly positive views of parents and the enthusiasm that pupils show for learning. Valewood is a happy and safe place to be.
- Leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders' self-evaluation is thorough and accurate, which means leaders are able to take swift and effective action to bring about necessary change. For example, pupils' achievements in reading have improved as a direct result of the improvements in the way reading is taught.
- Leaders have created a safe and nurturing environment that enables pupils to flourish academically, socially and personally. They have created an inclusive ethos through which all pupils, regardless of their learning needs or disabilities, are welcomed and cherished. Leaders actively promote high levels of respect and cooperation within school. Extremely positive relationships and attitudes to learning contribute effectively to the good progress that pupils make.
- The good monitoring skills of middle leaders enable them to analyse assessment information thoroughly. They evaluate assessment data and pupils' work and observe in lessons. Consequently, they accurately identify key priorities for further improvement. For example, improvements to the way that phonics and reading are taught have had a direct impact on improving outcomes for pupils, particularly in key stage 1. However, they have not yet ensured that teachers provide sufficient challenge to accelerate pupils' progress at key stage 2, particularly in writing.
- Leaders, including governors, have responded very well to the increasing proportion of pupils who have complex and challenging SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders have put in place specialist training and help for teachers and support staff, so that they are more able to meet the diverse needs of these pupils well. Consequently, pupils settle quickly and make a valuable contribution to daily school life. They make good progress from their individual starting points, both academically and in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Leaders provide staff with the opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise with other colleagues, including colleagues from other schools. They work together to ensure that their assessments of pupils' standards of work, and their progress, are accurate. This is especially helpful for staff new to teaching, who feel well supported.
- Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum that provides pupils with the skills and knowledge that they will need in the future. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and speak confidently about the need for tolerance, respect and understanding of cultures and religions that may differ from their own.
- Leaders provide a wide range of experiences to enrich the curriculum. For example, pupils enjoy the opportunity to take part in musical performances at the Philharmonic Hall with pupils from other schools. Occasions such as this promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well.

- The pupil premium funding for the small proportion of disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and pupils receive the appropriate help that they need. As a result, disadvantaged pupils across the school typically make similar progress to their classmates.
- The sports premium funding is used very creatively by leaders. Pupils participate in a range of different sports, including fencing and yoga. Participation in sporting clubs has increased and sports teams are becoming increasingly successful in competitions. For example, the girls' team have been very successful in their football matches, and the boys' football team were league winners in 2017.

Governance of the school

- Governors make good use of their frequent visits to school. Governors have a range of appropriate skills and knowledge. These enable them to gain an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Governors test their evaluations further by using the expertise of a number of external professionals to ensure that leaders' judgments in their self-evaluation are correct. As a result, governors effectively hold leaders to account for their actions.
- Members of the governing body ensure that the performance targets for the headteacher are closely aligned to the areas for improvement in the school improvement plans. Governors monitor these targets in a timely manner.
- Governors attend regular training to ensure that they are kept up to date. They are aware of their statutory duties. Governors understand and fulfil their responsibilities relating to safeguarding diligently.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Procedures in place for the protection of pupils are understood by staff. All staff have completed safeguarding training. They receive regular updates about relevant local issues and matters pertinent to the pupils in their care. The safety and welfare of all pupils is at the heart of everything that staff do.
- Thorough risk assessments are completed regularly for the school premises, and for outdoor learning activities, to ensure that pupils are safe. Checks are in place to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils, including volunteers who help out in school regularly. All records relating to safeguarding are maintained meticulously. Staff work closely with external agencies to help families access the help and support they need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Good-quality teaching ensures that pupils overall make strong progress across the school. Teachers encourage pupils to learn from their mistakes, to take pride in their work, and to work cooperatively. Teachers promote extremely positive and respectful relationships, which contribute to pupils' positive attitudes to learning and the good progress that they make.

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and accurate assessment information enable them to plan well for pupils' next steps. As a result, activities ignite pupils' interests and effectively meet most pupils' learning needs, including the most able, particularly in mathematics. However, on occasions, teachers do not always provide the additional challenges that would enable more pupils, particularly middle-ability pupils, to reach greater depth by the end of key stage 2.
- Teaching assistants have the expertise and confidence to support pupils well. They are a valuable asset to the school and enhance provision, particularly for pupils with complex needs. As a result, current pupils receive the care and guidance that they need to make good progress and enjoy all that school has to offer.
- Teachers have improved the way they teach phonics and reading. Consequently, pupils are beginning to improve their comprehension, inference and vocabulary skills. Reading challenges set by teachers are improving pupils' stamina as readers. Pupils are becoming confident and competent readers, particularly the most able pupils. Pupils who find reading more difficult are given the help that they need to catch up quickly.
- Teachers use questions very skilfully to encourage pupils to refine their ideas and reasoning. As a result, pupils are becoming competent in solving problems and explaining the strategies and skills they have used, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers ensure that pupils gain appropriate grammar, spelling and punctuation skills. However, they do not always challenge pupils to apply this knowledge in their writing, particularly the middle-attaining pupils.
- Teachers skilfully plan learning opportunities to enable pupils to gain the skills and knowledge in a range of other subjects. For example, in science, pupils were using their mathematical knowledge to interpret data and statistical information in an experiment to test out the changing state of chocolate.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The extremely positive relationships fostered in school exemplify the high levels of understanding and respect pupils have for each other. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously. They help younger pupils settle in when they start school, share books with them and help at lunchtimes. The care pupils show to pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities helps make Valewood the inclusive school of which parents, staff and pupils are so proud.
- Pupils say that they feel valued and listened to. They feel well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a voice and are part of the decision-making process within the school as members of a number of curriculum committees. For example, the 'digital leaders' worked together with members of the art curriculum committee to organise a very successful photographic competition. Another committee worked with the kitchen staff to promote healthy drinks at mealtimes and have introduced fruit smoothies on a Friday as part of their healthy eating campaign.

- Pupils are well prepared spiritually, morally, socially and culturally to become thoughtful, caring citizens. They are confident, happy and enjoy all aspects of school life.
- Pupils feel school is a safe place to be. They speak proudly of the fact that there is no bullying in school. They are safe from hurtful name-calling, both in their classrooms and around the school.
- Pupils are full of praise for their school. They understand that even when they have moved on to high school, they will be welcomed back to share their achievements with pupils and staff. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors typically spoke of being part of one big family who care for each other.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They know that there is always someone to talk to if they have any worries or concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Attendance has continued to improve since the previous inspection. It has been above the national average for the past three years. Attendance for pupils who are persistently absent is improving. Staff work closely with the families of the most vulnerable pupils to ensure that they receive the help that they need to attend school regularly.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and conduct around school are exemplary. Their extremely positive attitudes to learning have a very positive impact on the good progress that they make.
- There are very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour. A small number of pupils find managing their own behaviour more difficult. However, well-trained staff ensure that any incidents that occur are dealt with sensitively and appropriately.
- During playtimes and at lunchtime, pupils chat happily with their friends and play harmoniously together.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In recent years, pupils have made good progress as they have moved from Reception and through key stage 1. In 2017, the proportion of Year 2 pupils who reached the expected standard in national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics increased. It was above the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. This high standard has been maintained for current pupils in key stage 1.
- Although there were improvements in the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, it remained just below the national average. More positively, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling was above the national average.
- Assessment information for current pupils shows that pupils across the school are continuing to make good progress in mathematics, and that rates of progress in

reading have continued to improve strongly. In recent years, pupils' skills in writing by the end of key stage 2 have not been as strong as they should be. Progress in this area is also improving, but not as rapidly as in reading and mathematics.

- Disadvantaged pupils make the same rates of progress as other pupils nationally. A higher proportion are working at the standard typical for their age at the end of key stage 2 in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The school's assessment information for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is extremely detailed and pertinent to each pupil. As a result, the small next steps in their learning are accurately identified. Evidence shows that these pupils are making good progress from their starting points, bearing in mind the limitations placed on their learning by sometimes complex special needs.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has remained above the national average for the past two years. Pupils are able to apply their knowledge accurately in their own writing.
- Published and current assessment information show that the most able pupils make good progress. However, too few middle-attaining pupils make the accelerated progress needed to reach greater depth by the end of key stage 2.
- Work in pupils' books is neatly presented and of a good standard. In mathematics, pupils' work clearly shows the development of skills and knowledge, culminating in pupils accurately solving mathematical problems. In history, pupils effectively apply their writing skills, for example in diary extracts written from the perspective of an evacuee.
- Changes to the way mathematics is taught have accelerated the progress that pupils make and the proportion of pupils working at a greater depth is improving. However, there is not always the same amount of challenge to accelerate the progress pupils make in their writing to allow a higher proportion to achieve the higher standard at the end of key stage 2.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children start school with skills and knowledge typical for their age. However, the proportion of children joining the school with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age has increased in the last two years. From this point, they make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1. There was a dip in the proportion of children who reached a good level of development in 2017. Detailed analysis of the school's assessment information shows that children made good or better progress from lower starting points.
- Over time, an increasing number of children who have SEN and/or disabilities join Reception. Their skills and knowledge are well below those typical for their age. They make great strides in their learning but few reach a good level of development. In response, leaders and governors increased the number of support staff in Reception. This enables staff to work with individual children, or with small groups, to help children catch up quickly.
- Children in Reception are curious about the world around them. High levels of cooperation are encouraged by adults. Children share and take turns in their play. They

use their increasing vocabulary to communicate their needs and explain their ideas clearly.

- Teachers use a range of assessment information to plan activities which capture children's imaginations and meet their needs. Activities cover all areas of learning and many use a story as a stimulus. For example, a book by Julia Donaldson about a worm with 'super-powers' has ignited the children's imaginations in their independent writing. A group of children were developing their mathematical skills by measuring the lengths of different worms to find the longest and the shortest and make comparisons.
- Phonics is taught effectively from Reception class upwards. Workshops to help parents understand how reading is taught are very well attended. As a result, parents know how to help their children with their reading at home and many stay for the reading sessions at the start of the school day.
- The carefully planned learning environment provides children with opportunities to practise and refine their writing and number skills independently. Resources are of a high quality and are used effectively. Children are happy and engaged in their activities.
- The outdoor area is used well to enhance children's learning opportunities. For example, children work with adults outside to search for worms and mini-beasts and record where they find them on a list. They work cooperatively to help each other write the names of the things that they find and share each other's experiences.
- Staff have a good understanding of how children learn. Extremely positive relationships foster a positive attitude to learning and, as a result, children in Reception make good progress.
- Leaders work closely with colleagues in local early years settings. Well-thought-through activities in the summer term before children start school ensure that children settle quickly into well-established routines once they start. Parents speak highly of the care, guidance and support that their children receive. They are extremely positive about how happy their children are coming to school every day.
- Leaders are very vigilant and risk assessments are carried out daily, especially in the outdoor activity areas. All staff have received the appropriate training and all statutory requirements are met. Leadership of the early years is good.

School details

Unique reference number	104890
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10045153

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter O'Brien
Headteacher	Helen Tantouri
Telephone number	0151 924 0483
Website	www.valewood.co.uk
Email address	admin.Valewood@schools.sefton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools.
- Almost all pupils are White British. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average, although the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The school runs a well-attended breakfast club and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils. They also talked with other pupils informally around the school. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with four members of the governing body. An inspector met with representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 75 responses and 37 written responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey. Inspectors also spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the three responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about the school's performance, a range of assessment information and a selection of policies, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Amanda Nicholson

Ofsted Inspector

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