

Eaton House – The Vale School

2 Elvaston Place, London, SW7 5QH

Inspection dates

19–21 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Good teaching and ongoing checks on progress enable pupils to achieve well.
- The headteacher sustains a positive nurturing environment which contributes well to the outstanding personal development and behaviour of the pupils.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have worked hard to ensure that the school meets all regulatory requirements and to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- Senior leaders, including the early years leader, implement effective systems and procedures to ensure that teaching is good and that pupils have a well-balanced programme which enables them to make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils report that they are well cared for and are safe and happy in the school. Parents and carers are highly satisfied with the provision for and pastoral care of their children.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Occasionally, activities do not ensure that pupils learn as well as they could do.
- Tasks do not always provide the right level of challenge for all pupils.
- Systems for the management of staff performance have not led to teaching which is regularly outstanding.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed 19 lessons, looked at pupils' work, teachers' planning and information about pupils' progress.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teaching staff, pupils, parents and carers. School policies and documentation were examined.
- The inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers following discussions with them in school.

Inspection team

Flora Bean, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Wendy Forbes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Vale School is a non-selective independent day school situated in Kensington, in central London. The school was purchased by the present proprietors in 1980 and is one of six schools in the Eaton House Group owned by them.
- The school is registered for pupils aged from three to eight years of age. There are currently 80 pupils on roll, aged from three to eight years, most of whom live locally. There are 43 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage who are taught in two Nursery classes and one Reception class.
- There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- The pupils come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and many speak English as an additional language.
- The school uses local parks for play and physical education lessons.
- When pupils leave, the majority transfer to selective independent day or boarding schools.
- The school aims to provide a 'warm, caring, secure environment where the emphasis is on treating each child as an individual and nurturing their individual talents and capabilities'.
- The school was last inspected in March 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of the teaching by:
 - ensuring activities and tasks are set at the right level for all pupils so all are challenged to learn well
 - developing the role of teaching assistants in supporting pupils' learning
 - ensuring there are suitable opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to choose activities for themselves.
- Ensure leaders make better use of systems for the management of staff performance to set clear targets for teaching in order to raise its quality to outstanding.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils achieve well in this nurturing school due to good teaching and a good range of subjects and activities. From their varying starting points, pupils' achievements are good across the ability range in all areas of learning. They are motivated and keen to learn. Many pupils are successful in gaining entry to chosen schools due to the highly effective support from teachers who know their pupils extremely well and tailor work to meet their specific needs. As a result of well-planned teaching and effective ongoing checks on their learning, pupils know how well they are doing and their strengths and areas for improvement. They persevere and enjoy their learning. Clear planning and effective teaching for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language ensure that all groups of pupils make good or better progress over time.

Through well-planned learning in English and mathematics all pupils have excellent opportunities to improve their literacy, numeracy and speaking skills. They make good progress in information and communication technology (ICT) with discrete lessons and by using ICT in different subjects. Pupils develop good skills in physical education. They have good opportunities to develop their musical and artistic talents with regular work in art, music and drama and by taking part in whole-school productions in a local theatre. Pupils develop their linguistic skills through learning French and develop increasing knowledge of the wider world through science, geography, history and work in personal, social and health education (PSHE). They can take part in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs. By the time they leave pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with the expected level of skills and abilities. All children achieve well because teaching is good and all required areas of learning and development are covered well. They make good progress in literacy, learning the sounds that letters make (phonics), and numeracy. For example, in one lesson children made excellent progress in ICT and PSHE when learning to use a computer mouse safely. Children have good opportunities to develop their physical and artistic skills through physical education sessions tailored to meet their needs, drama performances and extra-curricular clubs and activities. By the end of Reception children are well prepared for entry to Year 1.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development **Outstanding**

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding as a result of the nurturing environment of the school where pupils' individual needs are carefully considered. Pupils are happy and motivated to achieve well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They are particularly keen to learn about the different cultural backgrounds and experiences of their peers. On arrival each day, they greet the headteacher who knows each pupil individually. Pupils acquire increasing confidence in relating to adults, which supports the development of their personal skills and self-esteem. They are exceptionally well behaved in lessons and around the school and look after each other when they go out of school for playtimes and physical education lessons. Pupils who find learning more difficult gradually improve their ability to learn well and integrate successfully as a result of well-organised support systems.

Pupils report that the headteacher and teachers look after them exceptionally well and support them well in their learning. They relate extremely well to each other and say that school is part of their family. They report that they feel very safe in school and are confident to ask for support should they have any worries. They feel free from bullying and say that there is no bullying in the school. They celebrate and applaud success quite spontaneously in regular whole-school assemblies and in lessons. Attendance is excellent.

Children's behaviour and personal development in the early years setting are excellent. Children have positive attitudes towards learning and play. On arrival they play constructively and are pleased to be in school. Parents and carers leave their children happily engrossed in play. Attendance is excellent. Behaviour in and out of lessons is almost always outstanding and this has a strong impact on learning; any disruptions are rare. Children respond well to the high expectations of staff. As a result, learning activities are productive, helping children to develop a strong sense of self and well-being. Children say they like their teachers and respond well to the calm, purposeful learning environment. Children in both the Nursery and Reception classes say that they feel safe in school. They have an increasing understanding of the different forms of bullying and the damage that it can cause.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Regular assemblies and PSHE lessons support pupils' personal development extremely well. In a PSHE lesson, individuals talked about an object of special significance to them while other pupils listened well and asked good questions. Pupils enjoy cookery classes, art club, chess and tennis clubs. Effort and special achievements are celebrated and pupils develop high levels of self-confidence.

Older pupils develop excellent leadership skills through various leadership roles allocated. Years 2 and 3 pupils go on short residential visits and develop increasing confidence in being independent and responsible. Pupils raise money for charities both locally and abroad. Pupils gain an increasing understanding of English institutions and democracy through visits, for example, from the police and visits to London sites. Leaders ensure that when any political issues are considered, that steps are taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good overall and ensures pupils achieve well. Teachers' planning is effective and pupils understand what they have to do to make progress. Good questioning and appropriate activities mostly challenge pupils well. When learning is less good, activities do not always challenge at the appropriate level and progress is slower. Pupils are inspired by challenging topics. Teaching promotes pupils' literacy and speaking skills well, ensuring fluency and an increasing acquisition of vocabulary often beyond what is expected for their age. Assessment procedures and checks on learning are ongoing and help pupils to gain a clear picture of how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. Homework is set and marked on a regular basis for older pupils to help them progress well and to reinforce learning.

There is a good range of learning activities in the early years setting which enable children to develop their knowledge and skills well. Reading, writing, speaking and mathematics are taught effectively, enabling children to develop their basic skills. However, too many activities are directed by adults and there are limited opportunities for children to choose for themselves. Teachers skilfully pose questions to engage children's interest. For example, children in one lesson were asked to define the word 'transport' which resulted in much discussion about 'which vehicle did what'. Teaching assistants support learning although their role is less well developed in helping children to learn as they are often used in a supervisory role. As a result, learning opportunities are missed.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The quality of the curriculum (planning for subjects and activities) is good and it is well planned so pupils learn well. It covers all the required areas of learning well and provides rich and varied opportunities for good academic learning and for pupils' personal development. The school places an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy, including support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. In addition to indoor physical education in the school

hall, pupils enjoy outdoor games lessons twice a week. Many take part in lunchtime tennis sessions. Regular work in ICT, art and drama, French, history and geography, music and physical education support pupils' learning well. A wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular clubs, visits and outings are organised. Good planning ensures that pupils' emotional and social development is promoted which contributes to their outstanding personal development and supports well those who find learning more difficult. Work in the early years setting is organised efficiently and provides children with valuable opportunities to make good progress in the required areas of learning and development.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety **Good**

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good and all regulations are met. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures are in place and these are implemented effectively to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are robust and meet all requirements. Rigorous procedures for safer recruitment are followed consistently. All the required checks for the suitability of staff are recorded correctly in the single central register and updated as required. The school has designated safeguarding officers who are appropriately trained. Risk assessments are thorough and updated as required.

Arrangements for fire safety and first aid are rigorous and procedures are implemented consistently across the school. The policies and procedures for the prevention of bullying, the promotion of good behaviour, and the safe use of the internet are sufficiently detailed to support the staff to ensure the well-being of the pupils. Staff training and procedures for first aid and health and safety are up to date and appropriate. Supervision is vigilant both in and out of school. The supervision of pupils out of school for play and physical education is rigorous. Staff work together as a team extremely well to ensure the safety of the pupils at all times. The pupils know the school's rules and follow instructions stringently. Pupils report no bullying and staff deal very swiftly with any behavioural issues which may arise. The school provides a well-balanced lunch and pupils eat healthily and have regular physical exercise.

Leadership and management **Good**

The leadership and management of the school are good and leaders enable pupils to learn well. The proprietors support the senior leaders very effectively. The headteacher and senior leaders work well together to support the aims of the school and ongoing educational developments. A senior executive team, which includes the proprietors and headteachers of all the schools within the group, meets on a regular basis to discuss forward planning and other developments. Leaders consistently communicate high expectations and ambition. The school is aware of its current performance and of areas for development. The nurturing environment of the school promotes pupils' outstanding behaviour and all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The proprietors work successfully with the school to ensure safeguarding procedures are rigorously adhered to including for safer recruitment and the updating of appropriate training. Senior leaders manage the performance of teaching staff but systems could be developed further to bring about further improvements in teaching, for example by setting clear targets.

The premises are well maintained and provide suitable accommodation for safe and effective learning. The proprietors ensure that parents and carers receive all required information and have up-to-date reports on the progress of their children. The complaints procedure meets all requirements. It is clear that parents and carers are highly satisfied with all aspects of the school's work and would recommend the school to others without hesitation. They appreciate the efforts the school makes to ensure that they are involved in the education of their children and that their children happily attend school each day.

The proprietors and leaders have ensured that the school meets all the regulatory requirements for

independent schools.

What inspection judgements mean

School

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	100524
Inspection number	441436
DfE registration number	207/6241
Type of school	Coeducational day school
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	3–8 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietors	Hilary Harper, Anna-Louise Cawood, Victoria Back
Headteacher	Robin Greenwood
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 March 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£13,200
Telephone number	020 7584 9515
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