

The Village School

2 Parkhill Road, Belsize Park, London NW3 2YN

Inspection dates

7–9 February 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The proprietor, who is also the headteacher, and senior leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The headteacher is a highly effective leader. She has developed strong teamwork across the school and has worked very effectively with senior leaders and staff to create a culture of very high expectations for all pupils. Her drive and commitment for continuous improvement is shared by all staff. As a result, staff morale is high.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. Consequently, pupils make excellent progress in a range of subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are confident learners and are extremely well prepared for the next stage in education.
- Children in the early years receive high-quality support and care. They make exceptional progress from their different starting points because teaching is typically outstanding.
- Pupils have a real thirst for learning. Their excellent attitudes to learning and their impeccable behaviour have a very strong impact on the excellent progress they make. Pupils love coming to school. This is reflected in their high attendance.
- The rich and engaging curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development extremely well.
- British values are effectively promoted and pupils are prepared very well for life in modern Britain.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school's work, including in ensuring that their children are happy, safe and well cared for.
- The outdoor provision is not always as stimulating for children as the indoor provision.
- The school development plan lacks sharpness in relation to timescales and outcomes for areas requiring further attention.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders' plans for further developments have clear timescales and outcomes for the areas identified for improvement so that there is always a sharp focus on the actions to be taken and their impact.
- Ensure that the outdoor provision in the early years is as effective as the indoor provision so that learning is of a consistently high standard.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders have ensured that the high standards continue to be maintained since the previous inspection and that all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher has firmly established a culture of excellence throughout the school. She is uncompromising in her ambition and her high expectations for pupils' outcomes that are shared by all staff. Leaders and staff demonstrate an outstanding commitment to shared values, vision and strong teamwork.
- Subject leaders know their subjects well and undertake learning walks and book scrutinies to identify strengths and areas for improvement. They provide very effective support and advice to teachers to bring about improvements.
- Performance management arrangements are robust. Staff are set demanding targets and their progress towards meeting them is monitored and evaluated closely. Staff receive a range of well-considered training and support to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are highly effective across the school. Leaders and staff work closely as a team to support and challenge each other to bring about continuous improvement.
- Leaders and staff are meticulous in their monitoring and analysis of pupils' progress. Pupils who are not doing as well as they should are identified quickly for individual support to ensure that they make rapid progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It engages pupils well in their learning and inspires them to achieve high standards, both socially and academically. There is a great focus on helping pupils to become independent, self-disciplined and confident learners. The curriculum is enriched by a range of clubs, after-school activities and visits. Pupils enjoy a wide range of artistic, musical and sporting activities, as well as learning Latin and Spanish. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school.
- British values are effectively promoted through pupils learning about rights and responsibilities, respect, democracy and the rule of law.
- Pupils have an excellent appreciation and understanding about the different cultures and religions represented in Britain and beyond. They have a great respect for diversity and equalities. For example, they have learned about gender equality and the importance of the suffragette movement. As a result, the school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. As one pupil said, 'The school really prepares us for life.'
- Parents are very positive about the school. 'Amazing', 'sensational', 'wonderful' and 'friendly' were just some of the words used by parents to describe the school.
- Most parents responding to the Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that the school is well led and managed.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body.
- The headteacher, who is also the sole proprietor, has established good working

relationships with external professionals. They provide the necessary support and challenge in relation to the headteacher's evaluation of the school's performance. The headteacher is forging further links with external consultants to strengthen the independent challenge offered to leaders on the work that they do.

- Leaders and staff have a very secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development through strong teamwork, continuous self-evaluation and robust arrangements for the performance management of staff. This ensures that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to improve and pupils make excellent progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding policy takes account of the latest statutory guidance and is implemented consistently across the school and is available on the school's website.
- Staff have a deep care for the safety and welfare of pupils and there is a strong culture of vigilance to keep pupils safe and secure. Leaders are rigorous and very diligent in checking the suitability of staff. They ensure that staff receive regular updates and training on safeguarding so that they understand their responsibilities in keeping children safe. Pupils are protected well from any radicalisation and extremism.
- The school works closely with parents and external partners to help keep pupils safe. Pupils said that they feel 'very safe' and all parents responding to the Parent View agreed with them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching continues to be outstanding since the previous inspection. Staff know each pupil extremely well and how to support them so that they make rapid progress across a range of subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics. Expectations for individual pupils are consistently high.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use questioning effectively to test and deepen pupils' understanding. For example, in a Year 6 geology lesson pupils explored different types of rocks and the minerals they contained. Pupils were able to explain how some of the rocks are formed and talk about the minerals they contained and their understanding was deepened through probing questioning.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and provide high-quality support, including effective questioning, to pupils to ensure that learning moves on rapidly.
- Teachers provide pupils with effective feedback on how they can improve their work, in line with the school's assessment policy. This helps pupils to deepen their understanding of ideas and concepts.
- The most able pupils are set challenging work that makes them think hard and achieve well. Once they complete their work, they swiftly move on to further, more challenging, work. In this way, no learning time is wasted.
- There is a great deal of focus on building pupils' vocabulary and communication skills,

with speaking and listening at the heart of teaching and learning. This helps pupils to succeed with their learning, including those who speak English as an additional language.

- One of the strengths of teaching is the very strong working relationship between pupils and staff and between pupils. This makes a considerable contribution to the highly positive classroom environment where pupils are consistently motivated and engaged in their learning.
- Pupils are keen to learn and teachers make good use of praise and encouragement to help them do their best. Pupils are self-motivated and work independently to do well. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson no time was wasted by pupils to attempt their mathematics challenge and complete it in the shortest possible time. There was a real sense of achievement when some pupils finished in record time.
- Resources are effectively used, including video clips and computers, to support pupils' learning. For example, Year 6 pupils used the internet to explore how a Tsunami is created and its physical and human impact.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is successfully threaded through the curriculum. In an English lesson on Shakespeare's plays, Year 6 pupils considered 'Othello' and 'The merchant of Venice' to reflect on equality issues. Pupils successfully discussed the issues of racism and anti-Semitism in a very open and free manner and showed their opposition to prejudice and discrimination.
- Teachers monitor pupils' progress in lessons effectively and correct any misconceptions they may have with their work to move their learning on swiftly. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils were making predications of missing numbers and the teacher was able to offer them timely support to help them tackle some of the challenging questions.
- The teaching of phonics is effective and helps younger pupils, particularly at key stage 1, to read difficult or unfamiliar words. Overall, pupils are strong readers and read for pleasure.
- Pupils enjoy learning Spanish across the school and benefit from specialist teaching that helps them to make strong progress in this subject.
- Pupils reported that teaching is 'great' and they value their teachers deeply. One pupil said, 'We can see our teachers are very passionate about teaching.'
- Nearly all parents responding to Parent View agreed that their child is taught well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff know and value every individual pupil extremely well and the relationships between them and the pupils are very positive. Pupils are self-disciplined and very confident learners and have a real thirst for learning.
- Pupils are very polite, courteous and friendly. They are respectful of each other and adults. They talk extremely positively about the school to visitors and are very proud of

their achievements.

- Pupils are involved in discussions and debates and are keen to express their views, while showing respect for other view points from their classmates.
- Pupils said that they feel 'very safe' in school and would not hesitate to approach an adult if they had any concerns or worries. Pupils are taught very well about different unsafe situations and how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about safety in relation to fire, when crossing roads and using the internet.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. They said that bullying, racism and name-calling are extremely rare. This is reflected in the very few incidents of poor behaviour recorded in the incident book.
- Pupils have numerous responsibilities around the school that they enjoy, including, for example, being head girl, prefects, house captains and members of the school council. Key stage 2 pupils listen to younger children and act as 'reading buddies.' One pupil said, 'No matter what age you are, you will have responsibility in the school to prepare you for life.'
- Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures, including aspects such as equality and fairness. They show much respect for other beliefs and opinions and value diversity.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Leaders have ensured that pupils' exemplary behaviour has been maintained. They ensure that the school is a very calm, harmonious and welcoming community.
- Pupils show great kindness, care and respect for each other. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and their punctuality is good and attendance high. Persistent absence is very low and is not an issue for the school. There have been no exclusions since the previous inspection.
- Pupils that inspectors spoke with said that behaviour is 'very good' and struggled to mention incidents of bullying or name-calling. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points and develop excellent knowledge, understanding and skills rapidly across a wide range of subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Work in pupils' books and the school's information about pupils' achievement show that pupils make sustained and substantial progress from their various starting points.
- At the end of key stages 1 and 2 in 2016, pupils' attainment in mathematics, reading and writing was well above average. Overall, pupils are prepared extremely well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils read widely and often and have a real love for reading. They read with confidence and fluency at a level that is at least appropriate to their age, with many reading at a

level well beyond their chronological age.

- Pupils write extremely well and they write for different purposes. Their writing is celebrated in engaging displays around the school. Pupils routinely write at length and across the different subject areas to improve their writing skills.
- Pupils enjoy learning mathematics. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and the challenging work they set ensure that pupils make excellent progress in mathematics. Pupils show much confidence in using a range of operations to solve problems and they use the correct mathematical vocabulary to explain their answers.
- Pupils make strong progress in science. They are given challenging work and are required to think hard about the science investigations they do. For example, Year 2 investigated forces and predicted the ease with which different materials would move on a surface, after considering their texture.
- The most able pupils are sufficiently challenged through hard and demanding work so that they make the progress of which they are capable. Their attainment at higher levels the end of key stages 1 and 2 has been above the national average since the previous inspection.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress from their starting points. The strong, supportive environment and rich opportunities for speaking and listening help them to make rapid progress and attain as well as their peers.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met in relation to the early years provision and that there are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements.
- Children enter the Nursery with a range of skills and abilities. At the end of the Reception Year in 2016, nearly all of the children achieved a good level of development.
- The current children in the Nursery Year have much stronger knowledge and basic skills compared to the previous year's cohort; their skills are generally above those typically expected for their age. Most children, including the most able children, are on track to achieve well in 2017.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding and children, including the most able children and those who speak English as an additional language, make excellent progress across the different areas of learning.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. Children in the Reception class were able to blend their letter sounds in words and used vowels appropriately in their writing; for example, 'train' and 'write'.
- The learning environment is very calm, orderly and purposeful. Staff ensure that learning is stimulating for children and provide activities that are varied, rich and imaginative. For example, children practise their writing skills, reading skills and artistic skills. Singing gives children an opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts. In the Nursery class, children made strong progress with their numeracy skills through using 'sticks' to represent 2D shapes. Children enjoy responding in Spanish when the register is taken.

- Children have a strong 'have a go' approach to their learning and staff take every opportunity to ensure that they are challenged and constantly learning. In the Nursery class, children's artistic work on hibernation helped them to discover the world around them. Their understanding was reinforced by staff through effective questioning that allowed the children to recall their learning on how some animals sleep during the winter.
- Children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They are motivated and have a real appetite for learning. They are proud of their achievements and are always keen to share their learning with adults, including visitors. They interact, share and cooperate extremely well with each other. Children show a high degree of independence and make choices about their learning. However, the outdoor area lacks a good enough range of resources to extend children's learning further.
- Staff ensure that there are close links with parents so that children settle and become familiar with routines quickly when they join the Nursery class. Communication with parents is strong and they are kept well informed about the progress their children make.
- The leadership of the early years is outstanding. The early years leader and staff track the progress of children carefully and plan activities effectively to ensure that children make rapid progress. Assessment is accurate and based on close observations of children's learning. Their next stage of learning is carefully identified with appropriate follow-up activities to address any gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The leader knows the strengths of the provision, including some of the areas for improvement. Leaders provide high-quality support and training for staff to ensure continuous improvement, including in the quality of teaching.
- The early years staff ensure that children are prepared extremely well for entry to Year 1.
- Safeguarding is effective.

School details

Unique reference number	100077
DfE registration number	202/6353
Inspection number	10006054

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Carol Gay
Headteacher	Carol Gay
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,525
Telephone number	020 7485 4673
Website	www.thevillageschool.org.uk
Email address	admin@thevillageschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 October 2012

Information about this school

- The Village School is a preparatory independent day school for girls aged from three to 11 years. It was established in North West London in 1985 and has been under the ownership of the current headteacher since September 2007.
- There are 95 pupils on roll, none of whom are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Children come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Most children are from a White British background. Approximately a quarter of the pupils come from homes where English is an additional language; most of these pupils are at advanced stages of learning English as an additional language.
- The early years consists of a full-time Nursey class and a Reception class. The Nursery

class opened in September 2010. No children receive free nursery education funding.

- The school aims to provide pupils with 'high quality teaching and learning, delivering a curriculum for the development of the whole child in a safe, secure, happy, caring and stimulating environment'.
- The school does not currently use the services of any alternative education providers.
- The school has no governing body.
- The headteacher is also the sole proprietor of the school.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school was last inspected in October 2012. At this time, the school was judged to be outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The school was informed of this inspection on the day before the inspection started. Two inspectors carried out the inspection.
- The inspectors checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspectors observed learning in lessons in all of the classes. A few visits to classrooms were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- A meeting was held with pupils to discuss their learning and views about the school. An inspector listened to pupils read in Years 2 and 6 and discussed their reading with them. In addition, inspectors listened to pupils read in lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised books, checked the single central register of employment checks on staff, looked at pupils' attendance and behaviour records and the school improvement plan, and examined documents and policies on the curriculum, safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety.
- The inspectors met with headteacher and senior leaders, managers and parents. In addition, they attended the staff morning briefing.
- Inspectors considered 44 responses to Parent View. Inspectors also met some parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors considered 25 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Avtar Sherri, lead inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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