

Inspection of Vale of Evesham School

Four Pools Lane, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 1BN

Inspection dates: 6–7 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Good

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They get a warm welcome on arrival. Pupils who can, say that they feel safe in school. Sadly, though, this is not always the case. Over time, leaders and governors have not paid enough attention to all the different actions they should take to keep everyone safe.

Pupils are usually supported well to manage their behaviour, but there are times when pupils behave in an unsafe way. When this is the case, staff do not intervene quickly enough to keep them safe. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem at school. They know they can talk to a member of staff who will help them with any problems. Pupils enjoy wide-ranging experiences, such as clubs and trips.

Staff use information about every pupil thoughtfully to plan activities that will help pupils learn new skills and remember more about different subjects. However, leaders have not thought carefully enough about the order in which pupils will learn the content of some subjects. Older pupils do not have a wide enough choice of courses they can take before they leave school. The most able pupils are not being challenged enough to achieve higher qualifications.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, governors and the trust do not have a good enough understanding about what is and is not working properly at the school. As a result, they have not taken the actions they should to make sure it is running smoothly. The school's self-evaluation and development planning are weak. Leadership capacity has been reduced in the last year and, currently, responsibilities are unclear. Safeguarding practices are poor. Leaders have not done what they should to keep pupils safe. The headteacher, in the short time she has been in post, has quickly understood the issues that need to be addressed. She has already begun to make improvements to the school.

Leaders want to ensure that pupils are excited about their learning. They know that pupils have wide-ranging abilities and so need different activities and support to help them learn new skills and knowledge. Leaders are changing the curriculum to make these things happen, but they still have a lot of work to do to put these changes into practice.

Teachers plan activities which match pupils' individual needs. They encourage more-able pupils to work independently. Subject leaders plan mathematics well to help pupils know more and remember more. In humanities, inspectors saw pupils using their knowledge from previous lessons to help them re-enact the Simon de Montfort story, and sort recycling materials successfully. However, leaders have not got a good enough grasp of what is being taught in all subjects. They have not ensured that all subjects follow the agreed assessment system.

Pupils get good support to help them to develop their language and communication skills from the moment they start school. This is because staff are trained well to do this. Staff work closely with speech and language therapists, ensuring pupils are getting the right help they need. Children in the early years are given fun activities to help them learn new skills. Phonics and early reading are taught well in this part of the school. Children enjoy rhymes and songs and listening to stories. However, there is some variation in the quality of the experiences pupils get from class to class.

Leaders know that learning to read is important for pupils, but some classes do not promote a love of reading well enough. This is because books are stored in a haphazard way, or not cared for. Leaders have not mapped out the range of books that teachers use. This means that they cannot make sure that pupils experience a range of different types of books, such as fiction and non-fiction, in a systematic way.

Leaders plan careers education well. Pupils benefit from well-planned work experience. Older pupils have a wide range of opportunities to work outside the classroom, including participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, for example. They are actively involved in charity work and the school parliament. However, in key stage 4, pupils access a limited range of accreditations. They do not have the opportunity to gain qualifications in physical education or humanities subjects. This is also the case for students in the sixth form. While students benefit from attending the local college, the most able students are not being challenged to achieve the higher-level qualifications of which they are capable.

Staff put a lot of thought into planning how to help pupils manage their behaviour, and expectations are clear. As a result, there are convincing examples of individual pupils' behaviour improving over time. They support pupils well, especially when moving around the building. However, on several occasions, inspectors saw pupils being less well supervised in class and during breaktimes. As a result, pupils are not kept as safe as they should be. The use of physical interventions is high, and staff do not report them consistently well.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities and experiences to support their personal development and improve their self-esteem. Leaders use additional funding to enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils' lunchtimes have improved considerably over time. Pupils enjoy opportunities to play basketball or ride bicycles at lunchtime, in a safe way. Food is of a high quality. Pupils help to plan menus and can make healthy choices. A range of after-school clubs are available, but there is limited take-up by pupils. Leaders have not given any thought to why this may be the case. Staff work well with parents to help improve the range of choices pupils make. Parents speak highly of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The trust has not made sure that leaders and governors are trained well enough in safeguarding to enable them to carry out their legal responsibilities. Recruitment practice when new staff are being appointed is poor. As a result, pupils are being put at risk of harm. The recently appointed designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has poor oversight of safeguarding arrangements. Too many people can access confidential files. Concerns have not been reported to appropriate agencies. Leaders have not ensured that the safeguarding policy is personalised to the school or that there is sufficient consideration of the specific risks in the early years. Leaders have not been tenacious enough in following up child protection concerns. Leaders have not ensured safe practice in the storage or administration of medication.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Safeguarding practice in the school is poor. Leaders and governors do not have a good understanding of safer recruitment. They have not made sure that the DSL is supported to carry out his responsibilities effectively. Staff are not trained well enough. There are too many examples of where pupils are being put at potential or actual risk of harm. Leaders should ensure that all aspects of safeguarding, from policy to practice, are improved as a matter of urgency so that pupils are not being put at risk of harm.
- Leaders and governors do not have a good enough strategic understanding of all aspects of the school's work. Their self-evaluation and development planning are weak. The instability of leadership over the last year, coupled with the trust's 'light touch' support has meant that there are unclear lines of responsibility and accountability. Leaders should ensure that there are clearly defined roles and responsibilities for members of staff so that they can be held accountable for their actions. They should ensure that the school's self-evaluation accurately reflects the school and informs school development planning.
- The school's new curriculum has not been coherently planned and sequenced over time. There is a lack of clarity about subject content for some areas, particularly in the key stage 3 curriculum. Curriculum content in key stages 4 and 5 does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to gain a wide range of accreditation. The most able students are not challenged well enough to achieve higher levels of accreditation in the sixth form. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is suitably broad, cohesive and sequenced so that pupils can build on their previous learning and reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Leaders have not put a strong enough emphasis on the importance of reading. They should ensure that there is clear planning of reading opportunities across all key stages, and they should assure themselves that classroom areas promote a love of books and provide access to a range of books that interest and engage pupils.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139444
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10128910
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tracey Guise
Headteacher and acting headteacher	Rachel Perks and Nicky Sentance
Website	valeofeveshamschool.org
Date of previous inspection	June 2016

Information about this school

- The school has recently appointed a new headteacher. She is working in the school for two days a week and takes up her substantive post in January 2020. At the beginning of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for two days.
- The school offers a number of assessment places for nursery-aged children. All other pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with moderate, severe and complex learning difficulties and those with an autism spectrum disorder.
- The school does not use any alternative provision. Some sixth-form students attend Pershore College for one to two days a week, fully supervised by members of staff from the school.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, acting headteacher and senior leaders. They met with subject leaders and teachers to discuss the curriculum in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors visited lessons in all departments of the school, usually accompanied by senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the executive principal of the Advance Trust, and the chair (who is also a trustee) and vice-chair of the local governing board.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to a safeguarding officer from the Worcestershire local authority.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work across a range of subjects. They talked to pupils informally in lessons, and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with the DSL and considered a wide range of safeguarding evidence, including the school's checks on staff recruitment, training records, child protection records, behaviour plans and records, attendance information and confidential files relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence relating to the school, including the school's website, curriculum documents, planning, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, governor minutes and associated trust documents.
- Inspectors considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, and the 68 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to the online pupils' survey.
- Language and communication, reading, mathematics, PSHE and humanities were focused on in more depth during the inspection.

Inspection team

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