

Inspection of The Village School

2 Parkhill Road, Belsize Park, London NW3 2YN

Inspection dates: 11–13 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff have very high expectations for every pupil. They ensure that pupils learn a range of subjects in great depth and develop their curiosity. Lessons and enrichment activities are highly engaging. Pupils told us they love learning. They relish the challenges teachers set for them. When they find the work hard, teachers encourage them to keep on trying and not give up.

Staff provide pupils with a rich variety of experiences. The many extra-curricular clubs and educational visits prepare them well for adult life. Pupils develop the skills and attributes to be responsible, charitable and caring citizens. They take great care of the school's environment; it is spotless. As a result, the school received the international Eco-Schools Green Flag award. Pupils raise funds for charities, local and international. They volunteer at a local charity supporting disadvantaged mothers and their babies.

From the time children join the Nursery, staff teach them to be kind and respectful. Pupils behave exceptionally well throughout the school. Bullying is almost unheard of. Pupils feel safe. They are secure in the knowledge that they can share their worries with a caring adult. They are confident that staff will deal quickly with their concerns.

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

Leaders are highly ambitious. They are determined that every pupil will excel in their academic, personal and social development. The curriculum and extended learning opportunities are well thought through. Pupils make links and apply their learning from one subject to another. They achieve highly in all areas.

The curriculum extends way beyond what is typically found in primary schools. In Nursery, for instance, pupils learn Spanish. In the upper school, pupils have regular lessons on culture. They study topics ranging from the issues of state and church at the time of Thomas à Becket, to comparing First World War English, French and German poetry.

Leaders give staff guidance on what pupils need to learn and when. There is strong communication between staff so that all know what their pupils have previously achieved. During lessons, teachers build on pupils' prior knowledge and deepen their understanding. Teachers have expertise in the subjects they teach. Their enthusiasm is infectious, igniting pupils' interests. They create an environment that encourages pupils to ask questions. In response to pupils' interests, teachers delve into matters beyond that originally intended. In Year 5 science, for instance, when pupils learned about the planets, they asked to learn about black holes in space. As a result, pupils achieve high standards across subjects.

Staff place reading at the heart of learning. The teaching of phonics begins in Nursery. Staff encourage pupils to develop a love of books. They choose reading

books carefully to ensure that pupils experience a range of texts. Pupils regularly read at home and often read to adults in school. Older pupils voluntarily read to younger pupils every day. As they progress up the school, pupils become fluent and avid readers, and develop an extensive vocabulary.

Staff provide extra support to make sure that no pupil falls behind, be it in reading or any other subject.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. The nurturing environment is warm and welcoming, and children settle quickly. Staff plan a range of activities that engage children well. These help children develop skills across all areas of learning, preparing them well for Year 1. However, there is a limited range of stimulating resources available, especially outdoors. This restricts children from reaching their full potential.

Across the school, children and pupils are attentive. They work happily together and help each other to learn. Disruption is a rarity, so lessons proceed uninterrupted. This allows staff and pupils to make full use of learning time.

The promotion of pupils' personal development is superb. The school offers an impressive array of enrichment opportunities beyond the classroom. Almost all pupils attend at least two clubs per week, some as many as five. These range from fencing to debating. Every pupil in the school takes part in a termly drama production. These build on their musical, dancing, presentation and production skills. Through assemblies, pupils consider the impact on society of famous women, such as Rosa Parks and Greta Thunberg.

Staff are adept at identifying and nurturing pupils' individual talents. The most talented cricketers, for instance, play for a county club. Some pupils have had their art selected for exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts.

Leaders have established strong beneficial links beyond the school. As part of their drive to promote pupils' health, the school took part in a project with Coventry University. They explored the link between healthy eating and sporting performance. This year, pupils have attended a private art exhibition at an auction house. Recently, pupils visited the Cabinet War Rooms where one of Churchill's grandsons addressed them.

The new proprietors bring much educational know-how to the school. They review all aspects of the school's work. They consult with staff when they contemplate making changes. Staff morale is high. They value how much leaders consider their workload and well-being.

The proprietors wasted no time in identifying that the early years provision is not the best it could be. They have started to act on their ambitious plans to revamp both the indoor and outside spaces. The proprietors make sure that the school meets its legal duties around the independent school standards, the requirements for the early years and The Equality Act 2010.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One typically wrote: ‘The school provides a safe space for the girls to develop. They create a real thirst and excitement for knowledge, a place to have so much fun, and instil wonderful values of friendship.’

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

In this small school, staff know the pupils well. There are strong trusting relationships between them. Staff are quick to notice and know what to do if something does not seem right. Leaders react swiftly and thoroughly to any concerns that may arise.

Pupils learn about risk and how to keep themselves safe in different situations. They have workshops, for instance, about online safety and diet and body image.

Leaders carry out all the proper checks on adults who work at the school. They keep the school site secure and in a good state of repair.

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 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 are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	100077
DfE registration number	202/6353
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10115201
Type of school	Independent girls' school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	91
Proprietor	Chatsworth (Village Prep) Ltd
Chair	Anita Gleave
Headteacher	Graeme Delaney
Annual fees (day pupils)	£17,970
Telephone number	020 7485 4673
Website	www.thevillageschool.org.uk
Email address	admin@thevillageschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–9 February 2017

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection the former proprietor has retired. The new proprietor, Chatsworth Schools, acquired this school in May 2019.
- The new headteacher took up his post from September 2019. The headteacher and proprietors restructured the leadership team. They created new leadership posts of curriculum leader and special educational needs coordinators.
- In a very few instances, the school makes use of part-time alternative provision at Emerson House, Hammersmith, to support pupils with specific special educational needs.
- The last standard inspection took place in February 2017. The school's overall effectiveness was judged as outstanding.

Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. This involved discussions with leaders and teachers, visits to lessons, looking at examples of pupils' work and discussions with pupils. We also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.
- We spoke with three directors of the proprietary body, the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- All the above activities contributed to our review of safeguarding. In addition, we reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and the checks carried out during the appointment of staff. We also looked at records of pupils' attendance.
- We considered the views of pupils, staff and parents about the school.
- We scrutinised a range of documentary information in order to check on the statutory requirements of the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lucy Nutt

Ofsted Inspector

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