

Inspection of Villa Real School

Villa Real Road, Consett, County Durham DH8 6BH

Inspection dates: 21–22 January 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff have extremely high aspirations for all pupils and the school is on the journey to being outstanding. Pupils are given many opportunities to be the best that they can be. Leaders and staff strongly support pupils to develop, communicate, learn and be active members of society. Leaders and staff know their pupils and care passionately about them. They have an in-depth knowledge of the needs of each pupil. Pupils say they love school and they love learning.

Pupils behave well. Classrooms are calm. Pupils' independence is promoted through all activities, supported by a highly skilled staff team. Pupils say they are not worried about bullying. Any unkind behaviour is rare, but pupils understand that adults will help if it does occur.

All pupils are given a voice and take an active part in their learning. Support from staff is carried out with dignity and respect.

Pupils work hard and achieve well. Leaders are constantly reviewing and developing how the curriculum is delivered to meet the changing needs of pupils. Staff make sure that pupils have the right support so they can be ready for life in the wider world.

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

Leaders, staff and governors are ambitious for all pupils to achieve their potential. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn as they move through the school. Teachers understand pupils' specific special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in depth. They use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans well to plan each pupils' learning. Support workers in each classroom have specialist skills to support pupils' learning. Staff training is strong and it is clear that it is beginning to lead to improvements in the curriculum. This is not yet consistently in place across all subjects. It is apparent that there is scope for further improvement in developing pupils' comprehension skills and opportunities to write across the curriculum.

Leaders want all pupils to be able to communicate and be ready to learn. As soon as pupils join the school, they are supported to develop their communication skills in a variety of ways. These include eye-gaze technology and signing, which enable pupils to access the curriculum and prepare for life after school.

Leaders continue to amend and develop the curriculum. Pupils enjoy a range of activities to develop their attention and listening skills.

Staff prioritise the teaching of reading. Pupils who are able, learn to read. All pupils develop their love of reading by experiencing a variety of stories. These stories are carefully chosen to excite and educate pupils. Staff explain difficult concepts well,

using a wide variety of resources. For example, they use a bird's nest to help pupils understand what Mr Twit's beard was like. This helps pupils develop a clear understanding of what they are reading. Few pupils say they read at home and those who do choose books at a lower level than they are exposed to at school.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils are highly respectful to their friends, teachers and visitors to the school.

Leaders work hard to make sure pupils attend school as much as they can, and they are working with external agencies to foster more positive attitudes towards school attendance for identified pupils.

Pupils learn from a tailored personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. Pupils learn about life in modern Britain and discuss topical issues. Pupils take part in high-quality trips and visits, which include visits to an art gallery and places of worship. In addition, leaders invite a wide range of visitors to the school. Pupils particularly enjoyed their sessions with an Indian dance troupe, where they learned about culture and religion through dance and discussion. The curriculum is strong and benefits most pupil groups well. In developing an exemplary curriculum, there is further work to do so that the most disadvantaged consistently benefit from these rich experiences.

Pupils are supported to be aware of the risks to their safety. They understand how to keep themselves healthy and how to stay safe online. Pupils are also given opportunities to help and support others. For example, the 'Thumbs-Up' squad allows older pupils to support younger pupils to make friends and play together. Leaders promote every opportunity for pupils' voices to be heard. Pupils are particularly proud of the work of the school council.

Children in the early years make a strong start to their education. They have personalised, bespoke timetables. Children learn to communicate well, using words, sounds and symbols. They settle quickly into school routines within their specific class. Children enjoy the outside area, where they learn and explore through a range of activities, including water and sand play. Adults support the children to play with others and develop key social skills.

Staff effectively support sixth-form students to gain appropriate qualifications and skills before they leave the school. Workplace visits allow older students to mix with members of the community and get a taste for life in the world of work. Students learn vital skills in budgeting and cooking. Development is ongoing for the schools' 14-19 provision, to increase the level of choice given to pupils.

Leaders and governors are clear about which aspects of the school are in development. For example, they are continuing to develop links with parents and the community. The high aspirations and care of leaders are shared by staff at all levels.

Staff say that leaders care about their well-being. They speak very highly of the support they receive. All staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders carry out thorough checks to ensure all adults are safe to work with pupils. Safeguarding training is regular and relevant. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to keep children safe.

Exceptionally strong knowledge of each pupil and strong relationships between pupils and staff ensure that staff notice immediately when pupils might be at risk of harm. Staff swiftly pass on any concerns when they arise. These are dealt with promptly. Leaders ensure that pupils get the help and support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although the overall quality of education is good, leaders have acknowledged that there are areas that need further strengthening. For example, leaders should continue the ongoing work to develop pupils' comprehension skills and increase opportunities for pupils to write across the curriculum. This will ensure that all pupils continue to develop their knowledge and skills even more effectively.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they could when teachers' understanding of non-core subjects is less secure. Leaders should continue to check that all teaching is consistently focused, and feedback is clear to pupils in order to ensure understanding.

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 are the school and you are 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

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| Unique reference number | 114345 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 10110657 |
| Type of school | All-through |
| School category | Community special |
| 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 | 96 |
| Of which, number on roll in the early years foundation stage | 6 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 7 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair/Chair of trust/Chair of governing body | Suzanne Bailey |
| Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge | Jill Bowe |
| Website | www.villarealschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 20 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Villa Real School is a community special school that caters for pupils from the age of two to 19 years.
- At the time of the inspection, there were a very small number of two-, three- and four-year-old pupils. These pupils, along with post-16 students, are educated in the main body of the school.

- The school provides for pupils who have severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some pupils have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school did not use any alternative provision at the time of inspection.

Information about this inspection

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

- We held meetings with senior leaders, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff. The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke to the local authority school improvement officer.
- We met with pupils to discuss their view of their education and talked to pupils informally about the school. We considered the six pupil responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey. We took account of seven responses to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View, and the 53 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspection focused particularly on communication and English, including reading, mathematics, history and personal and social development. We discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers about the curriculum.

Inspection team

Tricia Stevens, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paul Barton

Ofsted Inspector

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