

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Valley School

Whitehaven Road, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire SK7 1EN

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Inspection dates:

21 and 22 April 2022

## **Outcome**

Valley School continues to be an outstanding school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils flourish socially, academically and emotionally at Valley School. Caring staff warmly welcome them each morning. Pupils are very happy to attend the school.

Leaders and staff have the highest of expectations for pupils, including children in the early years. As a result, pupils and children follow the school's motto and make 'small steps, giant strides'. They achieve highly.

Pupils develop strong relationships with staff. This helps pupils to feel very safe and secure. Parents and carers wholeheartedly support the school. They trust staff implicitly to care for and educate their children. Many parents describe the support they receive as 'amazing'.

Staff supervise pupils closely. They act quickly and effectively if they spot any inappropriate behaviours, including bullying.

Pupils enjoy an extensive range of activities beyond the academic curriculum. They visit local parks and shops, take part in sports competitions and engage in well-planned educational visits. Pupils benefit from sessions in the hydro pool and sensory garden. They smile with delight and express joy as they use play equipment such as slides and swings. These activities make a significant contribution to improving pupils' physical abilities, communication skills and independence.

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

Leaders and governors are highly ambitious for pupils. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including children in the early years, incredibly well. Leaders have identified the small steps of knowledge for pupils to learn. The curriculum introduces pupils to this knowledge in a logical way. This ensures that pupils learn the knowledge that they should at the right time.

Leaders and teachers use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans as a starting point when designing each pupil's individual curriculum. They work closely with a range of on-site specialists to create aspirational and clear targets for pupils. These specialists include nurses, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. This helps pupils to build their knowledge confidently and to succeed across the curriculum.

Leaders and staff work as a close-knit team with a range of health professionals. This makes sure that staff identify and respond quickly to pupils' changing needs. Teachers use assessment very well. They observe pupils closely. Staff intervene to prevent pupils from forming misconceptions. For example, if pupils do not use their method of communication as they should, staff support them to do this correctly.

Staff benefit from excellent guidance and deliver the curriculum effectively. Leaders ensure that teachers and staff set purposeful learning tasks for pupils. Highly skilled staff use their expert knowledge of each pupil to promote engagement. Teachers ensure that pupils revisit learning often and in different ways. For example, teachers use a range of tactile resources and sensory activities to stimulate learning. This helps pupils to remember the curriculum.

Leaders prioritise the development of pupils' communication skills. Staff use resources such as pictures, symbols and technological aids skilfully. This helps pupils to develop their language. Inspectors observed pupils engaging with a range of high-quality books. Pupils who learn to read do so in a systematic way. The books that pupils read contain the letter sounds that they can recognise confidently. This improves pupils' confidence.

Staff quickly and effectively support those few pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour due to their complex needs. This ensures that the disruption to learning is kept to an absolute minimum. For instance, staff encourage pupils to select a helpful strategy from a list of picture symbols. Strategies might include asking for a task to finish or having some quiet time with a supportive adult. Over time, pupils increasingly manage their own emotions and learn to use these strategies independently.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about fundamental British values. Pupils experience individual liberty as staff respect their choices, for example when pupils ask for a snack. Leaders involve pupils in decisions about the school, such as how to develop the library.

Leaders care about staff well-being. Staff say that leaders consider their workload carefully. They appreciate the approachable leadership team and value the support of colleagues. All staff who responded to the survey stated that they are proud to work at the school. They spoke highly of the training that they receive.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff know pupils incredibly well. This means that they can spot concerns from the slightest changes in

pupils' behaviour or presentation. Leaders involve other agencies swiftly when required. Consequently, pupils and their families get the help that they need to be safe.

Pupils learn to stay safe in a way that considers their complex needs. For example, younger pupils safely explore outside with a member of staff close by. As pupils gain confidence, staff step back and supervise pupils from a distance. This allows pupils to make their own decisions about risks in a carefully managed way.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in February 2011.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106168
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	10199911
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	59
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Linda Hilton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen McLoughlin
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.valley.stockport.sch.uk">www.valley.stockport.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 July 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- All pupils in this school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school provides education for pupils aged two to 11 with profound and severe multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils have complex medical needs and physical difficulties. Some pupils have autistic spectrum disorder.
- All pupils in the school have an EHC plan.
- The current headteacher was appointed to the substantive full-time post in April 2022. Prior to this she was a co-headteacher at the school. There have also been changes to the senior leadership team and the governing body since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors completed deep dives in communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to staff and pupils. The lead inspector also listened to pupils reading.
- The lead inspector also met with the leaders for science and mathematics, evaluated the curriculums and visited lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. They spoke to the headteacher and assistant headteacher throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. He also met with a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and checked the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. Inspectors observed pupils during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to the staff's survey.

### **Inspection team**

Adam Sproston, lead inspector

Linda Griffiths

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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