

Inspection of West Vale Academy

Stainland Road, West Vale, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX4 8LS

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

This comment, written by a West Vale parent, is typical of many parents' and carers' comments: 'West Vale has come a long, long way. I think as a school they have made massive progress.' Inspectors agree.

Trustees and governors have taken effective action to ensure a rapid pace of school improvement. The interim principal, appointed by the trustees, is leading an effective senior leadership team. Pupils are making good progress and achieving well. Governors are already working with the incoming principal to ensure that this improvement momentum is sustained seamlessly from September onwards.

Most pupils behave very well. A handful does not. Although pupils' behaviour overall is improving quickly, it is not as good as it should be. Since taking up post, interim leaders have taken steps to improve pupils' behaviour. Their actions are working.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive in school. Leaders have trained staff to help them identify pupils' additional needs accurately. Leaders make sure that all adults know how to meet each individual pupil's needs well.

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

Children are getting off to a flying start in West Vale's Reception Year. Early reading and mathematics subject leaders have given careful thought to the individual needs of children. For example, some children start at West Vale needing extra help to understand numbers fluently. Leaders have adapted the curriculum to help children achieve this. As a result, children confidently explore patterns within numbers up to 10. Four-year-old children now recognise the number of objects grouped together at a glance. Children share objects equally. They check this by counting each object one by one.

Early years leaders skilfully build on children's interests. Children are excited to play and learn together. During the inspection, children loved pretending to be police officers. They dressed up and used toy phones, radios and handcuffs. Children practised their writing and fine-motor skills by writing speeding tickets and taking fingerprints. Early years staff help children learn when they are playing together. As a result, children are making good progress.

All subject leaders plan the curriculum right from the start in the early years. This means children are very well prepared for Year 1. In reading, no time is wasted making sure that pupils move quickly through the phonics programme. All staff are well trained. They make sure that pupils learn to read fluently and with confidence. In all subjects, teachers use assessment very well to check pupils' understanding. Teachers make sure that they do not move on until pupils are ready.

Leaders adapt the curriculum skilfully for pupils with SEND. The provision for pupils

with SEND is improving rapidly under the new leadership team. Leaders want pupils with SEND to keep up with their peers. In preparation for their next lesson, staff give pupils with SEND extra input. This helps pupils with SEND remember their prior learning. As a result, pupils with SEND take part in lessons with their peers confidently. Leaders have increased the attendance of pupils with SEND at the many after-school clubs on offer. Pupils with SEND are given many opportunities, including at music and skateboarding clubs, to share their talents with their classmates.

Leaders have developed an impressive curriculum for pupils' personal development. This includes excellent economic education. In 'money management' topics, pupils discuss questions such as 'Should we save or spend money?' or 'How do you save money?' Professionals from one of the big banks visited pupils in Years 2 and 6 to help pupils answer these questions. Meeting bankers also helps pupils to think about career options when they grow up. This is preparing pupils well for adult life.

Leaders have evaluated the standard of pupils' behaviour accurately. Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. A few pupils sometimes disrupt the learning for others in lessons. Teachers spend too much time having to sort this out, diminishing teaching time. In addition, some pupils behave badly at lunchtime. Some pupils call other pupils, including those with protected characteristics, unkind names repeatedly. Leaders have begun to improve pupils' behaviour during the less-structured times of the school day. There has been a significant reduction in behavioural incidents since March 2022. The new principal, who is due to take up the post in September 2022, has already visited the school to talk to pupils about her high expectations of their behaviour.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all the necessary recruitment checks are made.

All safeguarding policies are current and understood by staff. Leaders have trained staff to make sure that they can accurately identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders act quickly to address any concerns, working closely with other professionals.

Parents were consulted on the new policy for relationships education. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including online. Children in Reception Year wear sun hats when they are learning outside. Children understand why this is important.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few pupils have poor attitudes to learning in some lessons. Their behaviour disrupts learning opportunities for other pupils. Leaders should ensure that pupils

behave consistently well in all lessons.

- A few pupils are unkind to others. Some pupils call other pupils unkind names repeatedly. The victims include pupils with protected characteristics. This is unacceptable and makes some pupils unhappy in school. Leaders should ensure that bullying in all its forms is not tolerated at West Vale.

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

Unique reference number	145571
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10227648
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Carlton Midgley
Principal	Richard Pawson
Website	www.westvaleacademy.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- West Vale Academy converted to become an academy school in March 2018. When its predecessor school, West Vale Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- West Vale Academy is sponsored by the Great Heights Academy Trust.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The principal left in December 2021. An interim principal was appointed to lead the school part-time, for the spring and summer terms, from January 2022. The new substantive principal was appointed in April 2022.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 met the interim principal, the vice principal, the assistant principal, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the early years leader. The reading, mathematics, history and religious education (RE) subject leaders also met inspectors. Inspectors met the pupil premium leader, the personal, social, health and economic subject leader and the learning support mentor.
- A meeting was held with the chair of the multi-academy trust and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors met the chief executive, the school improvement partner and the director of school improvement from the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and phonics, mathematics, history and RE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited the early years separately, in addition to lesson visits linked to deep dives. The early years leader shared examples of children's learning and progress with inspectors.
- Inspectors met the SENCo to discuss provision for pupils with SEND and evaluate education, health and care plans. Inspectors visited lessons with the SENCo to observe the extra support in place for pupils with SEND. Inspectors sought the views of some parents of pupils with SEND.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety were evaluated on arrival at school, at breakfast club, in the dining room and at breaktimes. Inspectors met with several groups of pupils to discuss pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. These groups included pupils who had experienced sanctions under the behaviour policy. Some pupils were interviewed in single-sex groups.
- Senior safeguarding leaders and the multi-academy trust's chief operating officer met inspectors to discuss recruitment and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors checked all pupil leavers and their destinations to rule out off-rolling.
- Several parents spoke to inspectors during the inspection. Inspectors reviewed the 21 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey.
- Teachers met inspectors to discuss the quality of education and leaders' support for their workload. Inspectors also evaluated 16 staff responses to Ofsted's survey.
- Inspectors considered the five pupil responses to Ofsted's survey. Informal discussions were also held with pupils at breaktimes and in the breakfast club.

Inspection team

Tracey Ralph, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Dughall McCormick

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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