

# Inspection of V.A.S.E Academy

Oaklands Centre, Oaklands Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, West Midlands B21 0NA

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Inspection dates: 14 to 16 March 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

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

Leaders are ambitious for their pupils and passionate about improving their life chances. These aims are realised well. Almost all pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They have either been excluded or had prolonged periods out of education.

Pupils re-engage in learning, enjoy school again and begin attending regularly. They feel and are safe. Pupils build strong positive relationships with staff. This is because leaders focus on providing a nurturing and safe place for them. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves. Pupils get on well with each other. Staff deal swiftly and effectively with any bullying that may occur.

Leaders place emphasis on life skills and provide pupils with many varying opportunities to further their personal development. The school's 'green care and outdoor adventure curriculum' ensures that pupils gain confidence and self-esteem and learn to take responsibility, for example for the school's animals. Pupils enjoy this and flourish at the school.

Leaders have ensured that all staff know every pupil and their passions. Staff use the information about pupils to ensure they have experiences in a range of possible future career paths. Some pupils complete motor mechanics or bricklaying courses. This ensures that pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

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

Leaders have created a well-thought-out, ambitious and broad curriculum. They know that all pupils join the school having missed large chunks of their learning. Consequently, pupils have many gaps in their knowledge. The curriculum equips pupils with the fundamental skills they need to be successful.

Leaders have effective plans in place to address the main priorities first: reading, writing and mathematical fluency. This, paired with the green care and outdoor adventure and personal, social, health and economics (PSHE) curriculums, allows pupils to overcome many barriers they face. Leaders aim to meet pupils' specific special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and behavioural needs. Generally, this is successful.

The curriculum includes a focus on reading. Leaders have created a nurture group for those pupils who are at the early stages of reading. Here, they receive targeted support with their literacy skills. Pupils gain confidence in reading and begin to read aloud in lessons.

Staff generally use assessment well. Staff regularly assess what pupils understand and can do. They record what pupils learn and how well. Additional adults provide extra support for every pupil to ensure they can access their learning. This work is effective. Staff generally adapt their teaching effectively to meet the needs of pupils

with SEND. At times, learning materials are not always carefully chosen for pupils' literacy levels, and pupils cannot access them. Consequently, pupils do not understand the content and their learning slows.

Staff have good subject knowledge. Leaders choose teachers carefully to ensure they have the expertise to support pupils with SEND. Some teachers lack specific teaching knowledge. At times, they do not always deliver the curriculum as well as they could. As a result, some teaching is not as effective as it should be to support pupils' learning.

Almost all pupils join the school with behavioural difficulties. Staff quickly get to know every pupil and use this information to spot if a pupil becomes distressed. They then act quickly to de-escalate the situation and provide a safe and calm space for that pupil. As a result, poor behaviour incidents are rare, and pupils' behaviour improves after a short time.

Leaders have thought carefully about the programme to broaden pupils' personal development. They have created a broad and varied curriculum for pupils to experience. For example, pupils study horticulture, outdoor survival and life skills through the school's green care and outdoor adventure curriculum. PSHE lessons equip pupils with the knowledge they need to be active citizens in modern Britain.

Leaders also provide courses to meet pupils' interests, using external support. As a result, pupils complete a range of vocational courses linked to their future career interests. Leaders prepare pupils very well for their next steps.

Leaders ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met. They have ensured that the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff are well trained about potential safeguarding risks. This includes extensive work on understanding the mental health needs pupils may have and contextual safeguarding information. Staff know what to do if they are worried about a pupil. Expert safeguarding leaders work well to help pupils and their families. This includes working with external agencies. Leaders act swiftly to ensure pupils who need help get the support they need.

Leaders complete appropriate checks on all staff they employ and keep accurate records. They have ensured that the school site is safe and complies with relevant health and safety regulations.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Some teachers do not always carefully choose learning resources to meet the specific literacy needs of pupils. When this happens, work is too complicated for pupils to access, and their learning slows. Leaders need to ensure that all resources used are carefully chosen to match the needs of pupils.
- Some teachers lack the specific teaching knowledge needed to ensure their teaching meets the specific needs of pupils with SEND. When this happens, pupils' needs are not considered sufficiently well enough. Leaders should ensure that all teaching staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

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

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147702
<b>DfE registration number</b>	330/6134
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10267701
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	20
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Muhammad Majid
<b>Headteacher</b>	Muhammed Majid
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£30,000 to £80,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 551 4882
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.vaseacademy.co.uk">www.vaseacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:contactus@vaseacademy.co.uk">contactus@vaseacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 June to 1 July 2021

## Information about this school

- The school's last full standard inspection took place from 29 June to 1 July 2021. The school had an emergency inspection on 9 November 2021.
- V.A.S.E. Academy is an independent day school. The school's main base is at the Oakland Community Centre, Handsworth, Birmingham, where it occupies a number of classrooms as well as having access to a sports hall and outdoor space. The school opened in September 2021.
- The school no longer uses additional premises at 51 Downing Street, Smethwick, B51 2PP. Leaders have taken ownership of a purposely renovated building in Smethwick. They plan to move the school full time to these premises in April. They have not yet informed the Department for Education of this.
- The school offers places to pupils aged 11 to 16 who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Almost all pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers for part-time provision for individual pupils to provide vocational training.
- The school does not have a religious ethos.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and curriculum leaders. Inspectors also met with class teachers.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into English, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic education and the green care and outdoor adventure curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, conducted lesson visits and looked at a range of pupils' work. The inspectors also reviewed work across the wider curriculum, including enrichment activities and work around fundamental British values.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and spoke to them about their experience at the school.

- Inspectors scrutinised a range of safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy, spoke to staff about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Inspectors spoke to the safeguarding leaders about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.

### **Inspection team**

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Field

Ofsted Inspector

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