

Inspection of a good school: The Vale Academy

Atherton Way, Brigg, Lincolnshire DN20 8AR

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 April 2023

Outcome

The Vale Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have created a welcoming, ambitious and supportive environment at The Vale Academy. Relationships between staff and pupils are built on positive foundations. This is most obvious during 'proud Thursday', where pupils take pride in showcasing their best work to senior staff.

Pupils can engage in a wide range of activities outside of the classroom. They are enthusiastic and motivated by these enrichment opportunities. Pupils in the design and technology (DT) club recently won a competition to design the sculpture that will sit in the Vulcan aircraft museum.

Sixth-form students are fully involved in the life of the school. They are positive role models for other pupils. They support younger pupils in their lessons and in other duties around school.

Behaviour is generally good. Leaders deal with incidents of bullying effectively. Most pupils conduct themselves well, both in lessons and at other times during the school day. Pupils have a strong sense of being part of the school community. They appreciate the opportunities available to them. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps when they leave school.

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

There is a broad and ambitious curriculum. Key stage 4 pupils can study a wide range of subjects. Most pupils take history or geography at GCSE. The number of pupils taking a language at GCSE is increasing. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have the same opportunities. The sixth form offers a full range of A-level subjects, as leaders work in partnership with another local school.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is aspirational for all pupils. They respond quickly to aspects of the curriculum that need improvement. For example, DT lessons for key stage 3 pupils have recently been extended. Pupils now experience more of the theory to support the practical side of the subject. Pupils, including those with SEND and students in the sixth form, are learning the curriculum for DT effectively.

Pupils with SEND receive effective support. Teachers listen carefully to pupils' answers in lessons to check what pupils know and understand. They show pupils examples of how to complete activities. This supports pupils to understand and apply their learning and to achieve well.

Teachers make reading a priority across the curriculum. In geography, pupils read texts that also help them to develop their knowledge of politics and history. Pupils enjoy following the 'reading route', which encourages them to read books from different genres. Pupils who need extra help receive effective adult support to rapidly improve their reading.

Leaders have implemented a behaviour system with an emphasis on reward. Pupils respond well to this approach. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare. A minority of pupils are subject to sanctions, such as suspension. Some of these pupils have repeat suspensions. Leaders are developing new strategies to work with these pupils, and their parents, to improve their behaviour.

Pupils experience a careers programme which prepares them well for the next steps in their education. Sixth-form students are very well prepared for university applications and apprenticeships. Pupils in Year 9 have very good information to help them choose their GCSE options. However, leaders know that more could be done to give pupils wider experience of the world of work. Leaders have yet to implement their plans to develop more employer engagement and work experience.

Pupils have many opportunities to take part in activities beyond the classroom. This includes a wide range of trips and educational visits, as well as opportunities in sport, music and drama. Leaders encourage pupils to consider their character development through a series of 'pledges'. Pupils enjoy and benefit from this opportunity to engage in community activity, to join a club or take part in a residential visit.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular training to keep children safe. They understand the particular risks that pupils face in the local area. They know how to report concerns. Leaders ensure that concerns are swiftly followed up. Procedures for recruiting staff to the school are secure. Leaders work effectively with a range of external agencies to provide extra support for pupils, when needed.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They learn about the importance of good health, well-being and safety in their tutor time, through assemblies and from visiting speakers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils fail to behave according to the code of conduct. This has led to an increase in suspensions. Leaders should continue to identify and implement effective strategies to support pupils so that they improve their behaviour.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to learn about the world of work. They do not experience enough engagement with employers and workplaces to give them an idea of the range of careers available to them. Leaders should ensure that the school's careers offer prepares pupils effectively for the world of work.

Background

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

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2013.

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.

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	137453
Local authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10240468
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	754
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	64
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Hodsman
Headteacher	Sarah Stokes
Website	www.valeacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Delta Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust. A new headteacher was appointed in November 2022.
- The school uses three alternative education providers. One of these providers is unregistered.
- The school sixth form works in partnership with Sir John Nelthorpe School.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 met with the executive headteacher, trustees, governors, the headteacher, other senior leaders and curriculum subject leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, art and DT. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, met with those responsible for leading safeguarding, and spoke to pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- The views of parents were considered through their responses to Ofsted's parents survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors met with staff and pupils to gather further information about some aspects of personal development and behaviour.
- The views of pupils were taken into account by speaking with them and through their responses to Ofsted's' pupil survey.
- The views of staff were considered through meetings with teachers and through Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Carl Sugden, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Christina Jones

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