

Inspection of Vale of Evesham School

Four Pools Lane, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 1BN

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Tina Partridge. This school is part of Central Learning Partnership Trust (CLPT), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Doug Selkirk OBE, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Rob Turton.

What is it like to attend this school?

Every moment counts when it comes to 'learning for life' at Vale of Evesham School. The school has the highest expectations for all pupils. Pupils arrive with various learning barriers, such as autism spectrum disorder and speech, language, and communication needs. Because of caring staff and determined leaders, these barriers are overcome, and expectations are fulfilled. Pupils leave as confident young adults, eager to be part of the world around them.

A strong focus on positive relationships is at the heart of this special community. Staff act quickly when a pupil needs help or finds things difficult. There is a positive, calm environment in the school, where pupils are cared for and valued. Pupils have varying understanding about bullying, but they agree that staff will be there for them if they need help. Pupils are happy and safe because the staff care.

Forest schools, horticulture or pop-up cafes enrich pupils' time at school. Trips to places such as castles, the railway, rugby stadiums or local museums inspire an awareness of the community around them.

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

Over the last few years, the leadership team at Vale of Evesham has significantly changed. These changes have brought a fresh enthusiasm and drive to the school. Staff and leaders from both the residential and education provision combine to enrich the lives of very special pupils. Leaders and governors have a detailed and clear understanding of what the school does well and could do even better. Support and challenge from the multi-academy trust have been timely and welcomed by the school, which is eager to get it right for all pupils.

Leaders and teachers strive to ensure they accurately understand the additional needs of the pupils. Many pupils have communication needs. Others have conditions related to learning, health or sensory processing needs. By working with parents and specialist services, staff come to understand those needs. Consequently, the school plans a precise and detailed provision for children to overcome their barriers to learning.

Leaders are highly ambitious for what they want pupils to learn at Vale of Evesham. They have devised a curriculum focusing on what knowledge their pupils will need to succeed in school and life. Curriculum pathways provide opportunities for pupils to work with staff who are experts in special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Frequent staff training enhances their subject knowledge and skill in delivering lessons to children with varying SEND.

Children in the early years are happy and quickly become learners who like exploring and communicating. Partnership with parents and carers is prioritised from the start. Staff are skilful in spotting when early learning happens. A well-planned and

organised environment provides opportunities to develop early physical, personal, and social skills.

The school works hard to ensure that pupils are engaged and purposeful in lessons. A focus on developing awareness of others, listening, shared attention, switching attention, and turn taking create the right conditions for pupils to get the most from the lesson. Staff support pupils to complete tasks in different ways, such as using symbols or pictures. However, while some staff consistently use various communication systems, such as signing or symbols, others do not. This affects how much a pupil can understand, learn and remember from a lesson.

Recent changes have reinvigorated how reading is taught from the youngest to the oldest. For those pupils who are not yet ready to learn phonics, attention, concentration, and developing a love of stories and books are the focus of lessons. When pupils can hear and recognise different sounds, phonics is taught skillfully. Pupils are excited about the books they choose to read and confident in answering questions about what they have read.

The school works hard to understand what pupils learn and how they learn best. For example, for those pupils with the most complex needs, staff have written detailed engagement profiles demonstrating how pupils learn best. However, while some staff use this information to inform how they adapt future lessons or interactions with pupils, others do not.

Students in the sixth form are happy and enjoy the opportunities provided to them. Weekly visits to a local college allow students to experience college life and complete different taster courses in animal care, bricklaying and independent living. However, students' voices are not always considered when designing programmes of study. Consequently, the current courses do not always prepare students for their chosen path to employment, training or education.

Behaviour is a real strength. Sensory integration and carefully designed regulation plans help pupils regulate their emotions and feelings. Consequently, very few moments are lost through unwanted behaviour or moments of distraction. Pupils attend school regularly. When attendance does drop, the school works hard to know where the pupil is, if they are safe and when they will be back at school.

Leaders have carefully considered what it is like to be a child or young person growing up in Worcestershire. For example, they understand what challenges the pupils will face in their local communities. Consequently, leaders ensure that staff have the training to keep pupils safe in and out of school. This knowledge is then used to develop lessons to successfully help pupils develop protective behaviours.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not consistently implement the communication systems pupils need to access the curriculum. While a broad and robust offer exists for developing staff's knowledge and skill in this area, some staff do not ensure pupils are supported with the appropriate spoken language, symbols or signing. This affects how engaged pupils are in their learning. The school needs to ensure that all staff act on the training provided to adapt the curriculum and provision to meet the children's receptive, processing, and expressive skills.
- The school does not yet consistently use assessment information from the Engagement Model to inform how the curriculum is implemented. This means that, in some cases, lessons and interactions with pupils are not always clearly focused on what pupils need to know or how they learn best. The school needs to ensure that the information gathered for the Engagement Model is used well for those pupils on the appropriate curriculum pathway so that lessons and interactions with pupils are based on how pupils learn best and focused on what they need to know next.
- The current curriculum for those students in the sixth form is not precisely planned or sequenced towards preparing students for the next steps. While students are happy, the school is unclear if the provision meets their ambitions or aspirations. The school needs to ensure that the sixth-form study programme is precisely designed, planned and implemented to prepare students for their own chosen next steps.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any

point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148347
Social care unique reference number	SC043049
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10290682
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	184
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
Number of boarders on roll	9
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rob Turton
Headteacher	Tina Partridge
Website	www.valeofeveshamschool.org
Date of previous inspection	17 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently uses a local further education and skills college to provide opportunities for students in the sixth form to familiarise themselves with college life and sample different courses.
- Since the last inspection, a new interim headteacher was appointed from her previous role as deputy headteacher in September 2022. This role was made permanent in September 2023.
- An executive headteacher was appointed, in September 2022, to work at the school on a part-time basis.

- Two interim deputy headteachers were appointed in September 2022. Both roles were made permanent in September 2023.
- An assistant headteacher took up post in September 2023.
- A new safeguarding lead was appointed from her previous role as deputy designated safeguarding lead in April 2021.
- A new chair of governors took up post in January 2020.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the residential provision.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- During the inspection, inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: reading, communication, mathematics and cognition, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. In these subjects, they visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, and talked with pupils and staff about how these subjects were taught. Inspectors also looked at other subjects in less detail to check how they were planned and taught.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- During the inspection, the inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject teachers, the chair of governors, the chair of the trustee board, teachers, and pupils. They also talked informally with parents, carers, pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector also spoke with a representative of the multi-academy trust.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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Social Care Regulatory Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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