

Inspection of VLC

St Margarets Centre, 103 Whitnash Road, Leamington CV31 2HB

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 April 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

VLC's vision is to 'transform the lives of young people through education and care.' This inspirational school achieves this for all its pupils.

Pupils thrive at VLC. They are rightly incredibly proud of their school and their own and others' achievements. Pupils value the care and support they are given to succeed. They know that trusted adults in school help them. This enables them to feel safe. They say, for example, that VLC is 'a space to be me'.

Leaders' moral purpose is clear. There is a relentless drive to overcome barriers and raise aspirations. The 'preparation for adulthood' curriculum complements the academic curriculum in ensuring pupils are prepared exceptionally well for life beyond school.

Pupils benefit from a rich set of personal development opportunities. For example, they learn important life skills by preparing a wide range of food from around the world. Rock climbing and dance help pupils develop talents and interests. Pupils play an active role in their community, for example by organising a fair to raise money for medical equipment and by singing Christmas carols in a local nursing home.

Parents and carers speak incredibly highly of the school, with many saying that VLC is 'exceptional' and 'life-changing'.

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

Many pupils join VLC having missed significant amounts of time in school or following previous adverse experiences of education. They receive the specific care and support that they need to make up lost learning and to flourish.

Each pupil follows a highly personalised journey through the school's broad and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum identifies the important knowledge, skills and vocabulary in each subject. The school's 'stages of growth' are used to identify pupils' precise starting points in each subject and then to enable them to build their learning in meaningful steps. For example, in mathematics, pupils in Year 9 calculate efficiently using their knowledge of negative numbers and number bonds. Pupils studying for GCSE qualifications draw on previous learning when tackling complex equations. In English, pupils use complex literary devices such as pathetic fallacy to bring their writing to life.

The school quickly identifies any barriers to learning. Staff use information in pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) to adapt the curriculum to precisely meet individual needs. This means that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are incredibly well supported and achieve well.

In key stage 4, all pupils gain accredited qualifications which prepare them for their next stages of learning or employment. Some pupils choose to return and repeat

Year 11 to achieve even better results. All former pupils are now in education, training or employment. This is testimony to the school's ambitious vision to improve life chances for all. Where pupils express interests, these are encouraged. For example, pupils are given the opportunity to learn Cantonese where they have expressed a particular interest in this.

Reading, and developing a love of reading, is a high priority at VLC. Pupils read challenging texts from the well-stocked library. Where pupils have fallen behind with reading, they receive the right support, including phonics, to help them catch up.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are incredibly respectful. This is one of the reasons why pupils behave and attend school so well. Pupils value being listened to and cared for. Where pupils may need a little extra support, staff skilfully and subtly help pupils to learn how to manage their emotions.

One of the many strengths of the school is the support provided for pupils' well-being. Pin-sharp understanding of pupils as individuals means that external agencies and alternative provisions are used to meet pupils' needs extremely well. For example, pupils attending a local equine centre learn responsibility and empathy.

Every moment of every school day provides a meaningful opportunity for learning. From tending to sunflower seedlings to enjoying a sociable lunch with staff to setting up an in-school photocopying delivery service, pupils learn the skills which will help them to become active, responsible citizens. Visits to careers fairs are incredibly well thought out and supportive work experience opportunities prepare pupils for the world of work. Working with a local café, the police and poets, for example, helps pupils to learn about the careers they can choose.

Pupils understand, celebrate and are proud of difference. They show understanding of their friends in school and respect for others. They learn about the diversity in modern Britain and about beliefs that may be different to their own. The school ensures that it is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The proprietor body and governors share the same vision for excellence. They have appropriate oversight of the school's work and offer effective support and challenge as they continually strive to make the school even better for all pupils. They provide a safe, well-kept environment for pupils and ensure that all the independent school standards are met.

Staff are well supported and receive personalised training to ensure they can deliver the curriculum and meet the needs of pupils very effectively. Their well-being is a high priority to the school and, as a result, staff at VLC work as a harmonious, caring team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	148032
DfE registration number	937/6028
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10322604
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Number of part-time pupils	5
Proprietor	VLC
Chair	Reverend Brian Nash
Headteacher	Charlotte Skoppek
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,750 to £70,000
Telephone number	07340 820 763
Website	www.lvlc.org.uk
Email address	charly.skoppek@vlceducation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November to 2 December 2021

Information about this school

- VLC is an independent school that caters for pupils with a range of needs. All pupils have an EHC plan. The range of needs catered for includes cognitive, specific and moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and mental health needs, speech, language and communication needs and autism.
- The school operates across two sites. The second site is at Cubbington Centre, Cubbington Methodist Church, 26 Queen Street, Leamington Spa, CV32 7NA.
- Some pupils attend a second site.
- Although the school is operated by a Christian charity, it does not have a specific religious ethos.
- The school makes use of three unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school takes a small number of pupils each year to repeat Year 11 in order to retake GCSEs.
- Some pupils are taught away from the school site on a one-to-one basis as part of the school's 'Arise' project.

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.

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

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 any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and other leaders. The lead inspector also met with the chair of the governing body and other governors.
- The lead inspector made checks relating to the independent school standards, including checks on the school's premises.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, 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 also looked at pupils' work and talked to pupils and leaders about some other subjects.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at different times of the day. They spoke to pupils and staff about pupils' behaviour and the lead inspector looked at records relating to behaviour.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documents, including school policies.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- The lead inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also considered online staff and pupil surveys and one email received from a parent governor.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to the commissioner for SEND and inclusion at Warwickshire local authority and the virtual school headteacher.
- One inspector visited one of the alternative provision settings used by the school. Another inspector spoke on the telephone to two other alternative provision settings used by the school.
- The lead inspector visited the school's second site in Cubbington.

Inspection team

Rachel Henrick, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Hickerton

Ofsted Inspector

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