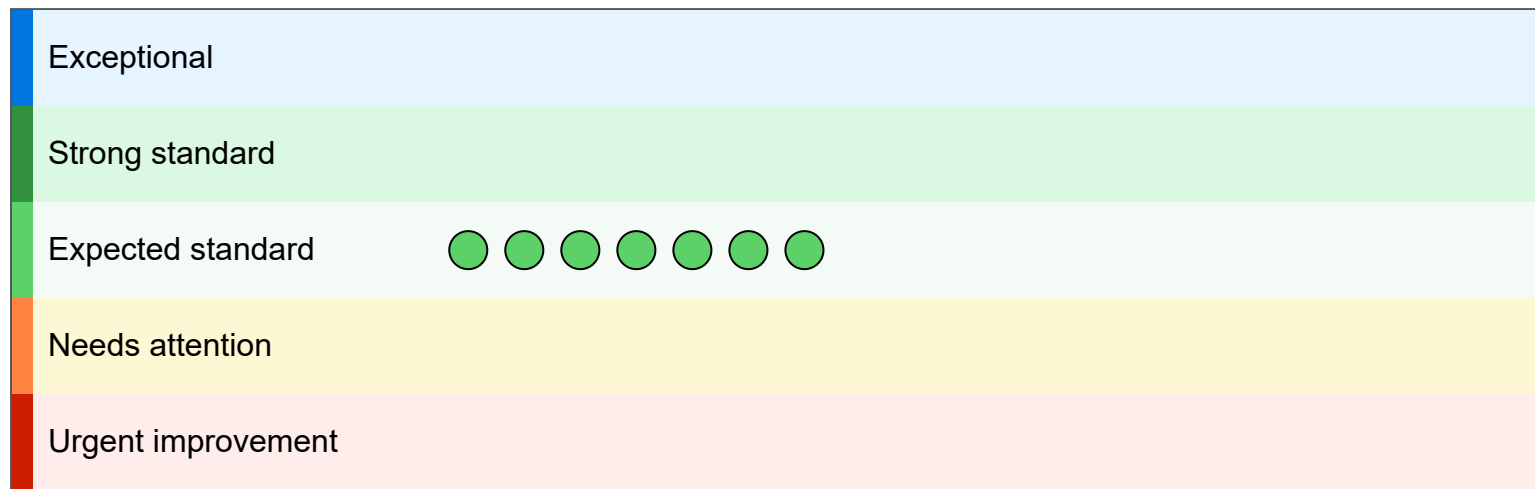


West Vale Academy

Address: Stainland Road, HX4 8LS

Unique reference number (URN): 145571

Inspection report: 25 November 2025



✔ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils tend to achieve well from their starting points. This has improved in recent years as leaders have made improvements to the curriculum and teaching. By the end of key stage 2, pupil outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are in line with the national averages. Disadvantaged pupils also achieve well. Their attainment at the end of key stage 2 is now above that of disadvantaged pupils nationally. The school has successfully narrowed the gap between how well disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils achieve.

Leaders have taken appropriate steps to address potential gaps in pupils' mathematical fluency based on previous Year 4 multiplication checks. Leaders are focused on improving this through renewed approaches to teaching mathematics. Pupils have secure knowledge of wider curriculum subjects. They can often recall and discuss what they have learned accurately.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils love coming to school and they attend well. Attendance is typically close to the national average, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders track attendance closely. They act quickly to provide practical support for families and pupils with barriers to attending well. Leaders have reduced persistent absence, particularly for pupils with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Behaviour in and around school is calm. Staff apply the behaviour policies consistently and model positive behaviours. Pupils respond quickly to adults' instructions and understand the school rules well. They benefit from reward systems, such as raffle tickets, which recognise positive behaviour. Serious behaviour incidents are very rare. Pupils say that on the rare occasion unkind behaviour does happen, staff deal with it fairly and quickly.

The school has given careful consideration to the emotional support that some pupils need to be successful throughout the school day. Pupils with SEND benefit from the timely and bespoke support they have throughout the school day. This is an important part of the school's work. Parents and pupils appreciate the positive difference this makes.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate for the school's mixed-age classes. They have thought carefully about how to organise learning so that pupils build important knowledge, including when year groups are taught together. In lessons, the school has prioritised an approach that develops pupils' vocabulary and confidence in speaking.

Staff are well trained to teach phonics effectively. In mathematics, leaders have focused on strengthening pupils' fluency. Teachers explain new ideas clearly and use practical

resources to support understanding. In the wider curriculum, at times the tasks in lessons do not help pupils to use and embed the key knowledge that they have been taught.

Staff use what they know about pupils' needs and starting points to shape learning in lessons. In the mixed-age classes, teachers plan carefully so that pupils build knowledge securely, and they adapt tasks when needed so that everyone can take part and succeed. Staff make thoughtful adjustments for pupils with additional needs, such as visual supports, tailored instructions, sensory breaks and specialist resources. These adaptations help pupils to stay focused and to work independently when possible.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children in the early years make a positive start to their school life. Staff get to know families before children join the school. There are extra transition arrangements for children who need them. This helps children to settle quickly. They feel secure in the mixed-age Reception Year and key stage 1 class.

Staff teach phonics with confidence and accuracy. Children practise new sounds in carefully chosen books. Writing activities support children to practise writing the sounds that they know. When sharing stories, adults emphasise important words and phrases. Children enjoy joining in with repeated language and actions.

Children's emotional development is well supported. Staff use stories and pictures to help children talk about their feelings and behaviour. Children learn to take turns, share and solve small problems together. Some adults do not make the most of opportunities to develop children's vocabulary or deepen their thinking. Leaders know this and have planned further training and coaching to improve the quality of talk in the early years throughout the day.

Parents and carers are regularly invited into school to join in with and celebrate their child's learning. Parents are highly positive about the nurturing support their children receive.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

There is a clear commitment to inclusion at West Vale. Leaders understand the community well and are responsive to the needs of local families. They are alert to the rising number of pupils with additional needs and have responded quickly to this. Staff treat pupils with warmth and respect. They are determined that every child is known, supported and included.

The school works closely with families, outside agencies and experts to best support pupils as soon as they join the school. Plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or other needs, are helpful and clear. They set out what pupils need in school and, where helpful, at home. Leaders check regularly that support is making a difference. Staff are trained well to implement the agreed strategies and support in the classroom.

Pupils with additional needs benefit from thoughtful day-to-day adjustments. For example, some pupils start the day with sensory circuits or have meet-and-greet time with an adult so

they can settle calmly. Other pupils use fidget resources, visual timetables or quiet spaces to help them manage their feelings.

The school employs well-considered strategies to ensure that any additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used to its greatest effect. This has a positive impact on these pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff are united in wanting the best for pupils. They talk with pride about the school and the community that it serves. Leaders have identified the right priorities, including support for pupils with specific barriers to learning. School leaders have also successfully strengthened teaching in English and mathematics across mixed-age classes. The impact of this work is evidenced in how well pupils achieve by the end of key stage 2.

Leaders make effective use of the trust's support. Staff benefit from a wide range of training, including through the trust's professional development offer. Coaching and mentoring are used well to develop staff confidence and expertise. Leaders pay close attention to staff workload and wellbeing. This is also helped by shared leadership roles across the trust. Staff are proud to work at this school and feel well supported.

The systems in place help trustees and local governors understand the school's context and priorities. They hold leaders to account effectively. Those responsible for governance demonstrate a clear commitment to inclusion. This keeps pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged, at the core of decision-making.

Parents are highly positive about the school, as encapsulated by one parent sharing that the school, 'has a lovely family feel and it's clear that every child truly matters'.

Personal development and well-being

Expected standard 

The school's personal development offer is carefully thought through. Leaders plan trips, invite visitors to the school and put on events to broaden pupils' experiences and ambition. Staff know pupils well. This allows them to provide carefully chosen opportunities that develop pupils' talents and interests. Staff remove any barriers that pupils, such as those who are disadvantaged, face to participating in the programme of enrichment.

Children in the early years are taught how to recognise their own, and others' feelings. This helps them to develop their social skills and quickly thrive in the mixed-age class. This is also seen across school as pupils are provided with many opportunities to reflect on their feelings and are taught to engage with others respectfully.

Pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibilities across school. Almost every pupil has a role to contribute to the life of the school. Pupils talk proudly about these roles and how they help the school feel like a community, where everyone belongs. Each year, the classrooms are renamed after diverse inspirational figures. This encourages pupils to think about ambition and their personal contribution to the school.

Pupils learn how to stay safe and make sensible choices, including when online. They can explain why they should be careful about what they share online. Assemblies and lessons help pupils to understand right and wrong and to respect differences. Pupils discuss these matters with passion. They know why this learning is important for them.

The school has taught pupils the importance of mental wellbeing and ways to check on their own and others. This helps pupils to confidently discuss mental wellness. Pupils say there is always an adult they can talk to if they are worried or upset.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel they belong at West Vale and describe it as 'a small school, but the best school'. Relationships between adults and pupils are caring and highly supportive, right from the start of their school journey. Pupils learn in mixed-age classes. This is well managed by teachers and pupils develop lovely friendships across year groups.

Children make a positive start to school when they join Reception Year. They settle quickly into the routines of the school day. Children and pupils are proud of their achievements. They work hard and want to do their best. By the end of Year 6, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve well and are prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the thoughtful support that helps them to take part fully in lessons and succeed alongside their classmates.

Pupils' attendance is high. They understand the school's high expectations of behaviour. In lessons, pupils behave well and are engaged in learning. They enjoy working with each other in lessons. Pupils say they feel safe and know who to speak to if they are worried.

Pupils enjoy their learning and talk with enthusiasm about clubs, educational visits and events. They have enjoyed a recent trip to Chester Zoo, for example. The school carefully chooses experiences and visits that will best benefit pupils learning and personal development. Pupils appreciate the many chances to take on responsibilities, such as being inclusion ambassadors or helping in assemblies.

Staff across the school are committed to reducing barriers to learning for pupils. Pupils with additional needs talk positively about the strategies that help them to learn and develop, such as sensory circuits at the start of the day and calming activities when they feel overwhelmed. They feel included and valued as part of the school community.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to improve the quality of adult-child interactions in the early years, so that staff consistently maximise the opportunities to develop children's language and communication.
 - Leaders should ensure that the activities given to pupils in lessons and subjects support pupils to remember their learning over the long term.
-

About this inspection

The executive principal of this school is Helen Crowther.

This school is part of Great Heights Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Amanda Bennett, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Carlton Midgley.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke to senior leaders, including representatives from the board of trustees and members of the local governing body.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This is a much smaller-than-average sized school. Pupils are taught in 3 mixed-year classes. One class consists of children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1. There are 2 key stage 2 classes: one comprising pupils from Year 3 and Year 4, and the other of pupils from Year 5 and Year 6.

Head of School: Claire Akroyd

Lead inspector:


Georgina Chinaka, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Matthew Knox, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 25 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

84

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

182

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

46.43%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

10.71%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support

28.57%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and maths measure.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 69% | 61% | Above |
| 2024/25 | 82% | 62% | Above |
| 2023/24 | 75% | 61% | Above |
| 2022/23 | 58% | 60% | Close to average |

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 79% | 74% | Above |
| 2024/25 | 82% | 75% | Above |
| 2023/24 | 85% | 74% | Above |
| 2022/23 | 74% | 73% | Close to average |

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher assessed writing.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 79% | 72% | Above |
| 2024/25 | 88% | 72% | Above |
| 2023/24 | 80% | 72% | Above |
| 2022/23 | 74% | 71% | Close to average |

Pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in maths.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 82% | 73% | Above |
| 2024/25 | 88% | 74% | Above |
| 2023/24 | 85% | 73% | Above |
| 2022/23 | 77% | 73% | Close to average |

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 59% | 46% | Above |
| 2024/25 | 67% | 47% | Above |
| 2023/24 | 67% | 46% | Above |
| 2022/23 | 50% | 44% | Close to average |

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 72% | 62% | Above |
| 2024/25 | 67% | 63% | Close to average |

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2023/24 | 100% | 62% | Above |
| 2022/23 | 64% | 60% | Close to average |

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher assessed writing.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 72% | 59% | Above |
| 2024/25 | 78% | 59% | Above |
| 2023/24 | 67% | 58% | Close to average |
| 2022/23 | 71% | 58% | Above |

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in maths.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 72% | 60% | Above |
| 2024/25 | 78% | 61% | Above |
| 2023/24 | 83% | 59% | Above |
| 2022/23 | 64% | 59% | Close to average |

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, including the disadvantaged gap.

| Year | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 59% | 68% | -9 pp |
| 2024/25 | 67% | 69% | -3 pp |
| 2023/24 | 67% | 67% | -1 pp |
| 2022/23 | 50% | 66% | -16 pp |

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

| Year | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 72% | 80% | -7 pp |
| 2024/25 | 67% | 81% | -14 pp |
| 2023/24 | 100% | 80% | 20 pp |
| 2022/23 | 64% | 78% | -14 pp |

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

| Year | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 72% | 78% | -5 pp |
| 2024/25 | 78% | 78% | 0 pp |
| 2023/24 | 67% | 78% | -11 pp |
| 2022/23 | 71% | 77% | -6 pp |

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in maths and the disadvantaged gap.

| Year | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 72% | 80% | -7 pp |
| 2024/25 | 78% | 81% | -3 pp |
| 2023/24 | 83% | 79% | 4 pp |
| 2022/23 | 64% | 79% | -15 pp |

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (1 term) | 5.2% | 5.1% | Close to average |
| 2023/24 | 5.4% | 5.5% | Close to average |
| 2022/23 | 6.4% | 5.9% | Close to average |

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (1 term) | 17.7% | 14.3% | Above |
| 2023/24 | 18.0% | 14.6% | Close to average |
| 2022/23 | 18.4% | 16.2% | Close to average |

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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