

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Villa Real School

Villa Real Road, Consett, County Durham DH8 6BH

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 May 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is truly inclusive. It has a strong spirit of community that supports pupils' academic and personal development. The school builds trusting relationships with parents and carers. It works together with parents in the best interests of pupils. Moreover, it prioritises pupil voice. It listens and responds to pupils in developing provision that enables pupils to succeed.

The school has high expectations for what pupils can achieve. It is expert in meeting pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils thrive and flourish at school. They access an ambitious curriculum that provides them with the specific knowledge and skills that they need. Pupils realise the school's high expectations of them.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils show kindness and respect to all. They are polite, friendly and support each other's well-being. The school has created a positive culture; it values every pupil. Pupils work hard and show resilience towards the challenges that they face.

Pupils are happy at school. They enjoy a wide range of activities that develop their talents and interests, including sports, music and art. Sixth-form pupils go on work placements in preparation for life after school. Pupils also engage in enterprise projects and give back to the local community.

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

The school has established and embedded an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. The curriculum is adapted with skill and precision to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. The school has developed curriculum pathways for pupils with autism, severe learning

difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. This ensures that pupils complete work that meets their needs and stages of development. Furthermore, the school tailors work to individual pupils' needs within each of these SEND pathways.

The school prioritises the development of pupils' verbal and nonverbal communication. Teachers provide pupils with an inclusive and immersive learning experience. In early years, children learn through song, rhyme and adult-led storytelling. Teaching engages children and celebrates their achievement. It focuses on the development of children's vocabulary and foundational mathematical knowledge. Children who are nonverbal use communication boards to show their understanding. They take an active part in group sessions.

Pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans inform the specific learning and support for learning that pupils receive. The school uses these EHC plans and a range of assessments to determine learning goals for individual pupils. Teachers break down the curriculum into small steps so that pupils can build and secure their knowledge and skills over time. Teaching support staff provide pupils with the help that they need to access learning. At the same time, they meet pupils' welfare and care needs. Teachers and teaching support staff work together skilfully to meet pupils' needs. Pupils make significant progress from their different starting points.

For pupils for whom it is appropriate, the school teaches them to read using phonics. These pupils get expert teaching that helps them to develop their phonics knowledge and reading fluency. The school promotes a love for books and stories. It ensures that all pupils access stories that engage them and support their language and communication skills.

The school has established a calm, safe and orderly environment. Staff receive regular behaviour management training. This training is specific to pupils' individual needs. It provides staff with strategies that enable them to manage pupils' behaviour in an appropriate and effective manner. Pupils show highly positive attitudes to their learning.

The school takes a rigorous approach to pupils' attendance. It takes into account the needs of pupils with SEND. Many pupils have significant barriers to good attendance, including medical needs. The school works with parents and external agencies to remove those barriers. As a result of the school's work, levels of absence have decreased in recent years. Attendance is high.

Pupils enjoy a high-quality personal development programme. The school goes beyond the expected in providing a diverse range of activities and experiences. All pupils access these opportunities. Pupils develop their confidence and resilience through outdoor activities. They also enrich their knowledge through visits to places of cultural interest. Pupils learn about relationships, online safety and physical and mental health. They learn about these important issues in a way that is appropriate to their stage of development.

Pupils also receive careers education and engage in activities that prepare them for life after school. Some older pupils complete subject and life skills qualifications. These

qualifications support their transition to college and internships. The school supports pupils and their parents in making choices about pupils' next steps. It ensures that these choices are in pupils' best interests.

The school has sustained and significantly improved the quality of provision for pupils. It provides staff with highly effective professional development. This enables staff to meet pupils' needs, regarding both pupils' academic and personal development. Staff enjoy working at the school. They show an unwavering commitment to the pupils. The school prioritises staff well-being and ensures that staff workload is manageable. Governors perform their statutory duties well. They provide strategic oversight and hold school leaders to account with appropriate rigour.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in January 2020.

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	114345
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10346303
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
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	122
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Suzanne Bailey
Headteacher	Jill Bowe
Website	www.villarealschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has provision for two-year olds. However, at the time of the inspection, there were no two-year-old pupils on the school's roll.
- The school uses four unregistered providers of alternative provision.
- The school caters for pupils with autism, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have EHC plans.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, the chair of governors, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors spoke to school leaders about behaviour, attendance and pupils' personal development. The inspectors also spoke to pupils about behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff and to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Ian Rawstorne, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Beard

Ofsted Inspector

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