

Inspection of Vale of York Academy

Rawcliffe Drive, Clifton Without, York, North Yorkshire YO30 6ZS

Inspection dates: 13–14 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Vale of York Academy is a welcoming and friendly school in the heart of the city of York. Pupils enjoy coming to school and learn a lot. Staff, parents and carers are very positive about the way the school has been transformed over the last two years. Pupils and parents also told us that the school 'listens' and teachers care. Pupils feel safe. Leaders and staff have high expectations of all pupils and want them to achieve well.

The school's motto is 'Always giving the best'. Strong, positive relationships exist between teachers and pupils. They say, 'The school has a community feel to it', and 'Teachers make learning fun.' Pupils have access to a wide range of trips, visits and extra-curricular activities, especially in sports.

In lessons, pupils get on with their work and work well together. Around the school site, pupils are polite and respectful to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils wear their smart uniform with pride. Staff do not tolerate bullying. When it happens, pupils are confident that teachers will deal with it quickly. The atmosphere around the school is calm and purposeful.

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

Over the last two years, the school has improved significantly. School leaders, with the support from the trust, have improved every area of the school. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils, both in standards and behaviour. Leaders take every opportunity to raise pupils' aspirations, for example by celebrating the many successes of previous pupils at the school. The confidence of parents in the school is continuously increasing.

Leaders have put in place a curriculum that is well thought out. In each subject, curriculum leaders think carefully about what pupils need to learn and when. Pupils' knowledge and skills build over time and their achievement has improved year on year. In some subjects, like physical education (PE) and design and technology, pupils use what they have learned from other subjects. For example, in PE, when pupils learn about the skeletal system, they also use prior knowledge from biology. This is not as strong in other subjects.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They revisit key facts regularly and use questioning well to check if pupils remember what they have learned. In many subjects, pupils could tell us what they were learning and how their knowledge is building up from previous lessons. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' work. However, the quality of work in pupils' books is stronger in key stage 4 than in key stage 3 across different subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. They access the same learning and experiences as everyone else. Staff identify pupils'

learning needs quickly and plan any support that is required. As a result, these pupils achieve well and sometimes better than their peers.

Leaders work very hard to make sure that all pupils attend school regularly and know the importance of good attendance. The attendance team works closely with families to provide any support required. As a result, the overall attendance of pupils is improving. However, disadvantaged pupils are still more likely to be absent from school than other pupils.

Pupils welcome the extensive programme of activities on offer. For example, pupils visit Paris as part of modern foreign languages. They also go on residential trips as part of extra-curricular qualifications and team-building. Pupils say that 'there is lots to do after school', especially in sports. Leaders are working hard in the community, especially with local primary schools. Careers education is a strength in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have lots of opportunities to experience the world of work, including enrichment days and work experience. However, careers education in key stage 3 is not as strong.

The principal and his senior leaders are committed to and passionate about the school, its staff and the pupils. They work well together as a team. Governors and trustees keep a strong oversight of the school's work. The trust provides very effective support to the school in many ways, including subject-specific training for teachers and leadership training for subject leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding records are accurate. Thorough recruitment checks are in place to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. The designated safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable and take safeguarding very seriously.

Teachers and pupils know what to do if they have any concerns. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and, as a result, there is a culture of vigilance. Staff know the potential risks in the area and what to do if they have concerns about pupils. Pupils know what to do to stay safe, including when online. Leaders also make sure that pupils who attend alternative education provision are safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have ensured that, in each subject, pupils' knowledge builds up over their time in school. Leaders must now strengthen the curriculum further by ensuring that connections of knowledge between different subjects are fully embedded so that pupils can better integrate prior knowledge into new learning.

- Leaders have worked hard over the last couple of years to instil high expectations across the school. Leaders must continue to reduce any variation in the standards and expectations of pupils' written work, particularly in key stage 3, so that the high-quality work that exists in key stage 4 is replicated across the school.
- Staff work tirelessly to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Although, overall, school attendance is improving, leaders must ensure that pupils' attendance continues to improve, especially that of the disadvantaged pupils.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are a strength of the school in key stage 4. Leaders must now strengthen the curriculum further so that pupils in key stage 3 benefit from careers education in the same way as older pupils do.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	143864
Local authority	York
Inspection number	10121663
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	588
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tony Myers
Principal	Toby Eastaugh
Website	www.valeofyorkacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The current principal was appointed in January 2019.
- The school uses Danesgate school for alternative provision.
- Vale of York Academy converted to become an academy on 1 April 2017 and joined Hope Learning Trust, York. When its predecessor school, Canon Lee School, was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2015, it was judged to require special measures.

Information about this inspection

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

- We met with the principal, vice-principal, senior leaders, subject leaders, special educational needs coordinator, teachers, trustees and representatives from the governing body, including the chair. We also met with the chief executive officer and the secondary improvement leader from the trust. A team inspector visited the school's alternative provision and held a telephone conversation with its headteacher.

- We held informal and formal discussions with many pupils and observed interactions during break and lunchtime.
- We observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files and recruitment checks. We talked to staff about their role in keeping pupils safe.
- We talked to staff, including the newly qualified teachers, about their workload and about the amount and quality of training and support they receive from leaders.
- We took into account the 39 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We also took into consideration the 30 staff responses and 57 pupil responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys
- We undertook deep dives into the following subjects: English, science, history, modern foreign languages and PE. This involved meetings with subject leaders and joint visits with leaders to a sample of lessons in these subjects. We also looked at books and other kinds of work produced by pupils who were part of the classes observed. Leaders joined us for this activity. We had discussions with teachers and groups of pupils from the lessons observed.

Inspection team

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