

Quality of leadership in and management of the school GOOD**OBJECTIVE:**

To have an outstanding school with rising pupil numbers and flexible provision to meet the needs of our pupils and of pupils from other schools

Leadership across the school is good, with much outstanding practice impacting at all levels. Senior leaders have a clear vision, shared and understood by all key stakeholders. They are highly effective in their roles, which are clearly defined and mutually supportive. The Headteacher has developed good relationships with other local school leaders to provide increasingly flexible provision, as well as guest placements and support with EHCP applications so that pupils are able to learn well in an appropriate place. Numbers are rising rapidly and the number of prospective parents approaching the school continues to rise in number, location and diversity. Applications for places are very high, but not all have sufficient evidence of meeting the criteria for admission. There are a significant number of applications from pupils who are not currently attending school, which limits the process for assessments to be completed and for places to be made available.

Middle Leadership is very strong, with a clear focus on finding solutions and working closely with pupils and their families to overcome barriers to learning. Middle Leaders are creative and imaginative, using rewards and positive enforcement, along with a commitment to "different for different", to effect tolerance and self-regulation to make lifelong changes. They have worked hard to develop an exciting and innovative curriculum to meet the needs of pupils and to ensure that pupils become confident to be learners and to face new challenges. They have identified a range of pathways to accredited qualifications and support pupils to be able to achieve their best.

Strong teams have been built within each pastoral area, as Learning Partners are able to use and develop their skills by working closely and with mutual respect with teachers. With a clear focus on engaging pupils in successful learning, they are resourceful in developing relationships of trust and determination with pupils.

Pupils lead on decision making and have significant influence. They are involved in all appointments and their views form part of the decision-making. They have developed rules around certain issues, for example, the use of mobile phones and protecting the theatre equipment. Year 11 pupils have their own common room space and provide buddies for younger pupils at breaks and lunchtimes. They can be observed naturally applying the same techniques and de-escalation scripts as adults.

Governors are fully involved in the school and are well-known and highly respected amongst staff and pupils. They are highly skilled, committed and very experienced. The Governing Board has given thoughtful consideration to the skills and strengths of each member and the most effective deployment of these, linking to named senior and middle leaders to ensure that they are fully involved and influential in all areas of the school's vision and practices. Ongoing, targeted recruitment of new governors to enhance the Board takes place. Governors often help out in practical as well as strategic ways and take the initiative to help get the job done.

The ethos in meetings is one of co-operative problem-solving to ensure positive outcomes for pupils. The Board is effective in balancing support and challenge, with a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the school. This is ascertained not only through meetings but also through formal and informal visits.

Governors have undertaken extensive training, both individually and collectively, to ensure they have the necessary information and skills to fulfil their roles confidently.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment GOOD

OBJECTIVE :

For all staff to have high expectations of themselves and of their pupils, For planning processes and responses to progress data to lead to highly effective and engaging learning experiences for all pupils

The learning experience in the school is designed to be imaginative and exciting. Staff development has improved staff understanding of the need to balance new learning, consolidation and extension to ensure that learning is embedded and retained. Planning is focused on clarity around creating the right balance between new learning, consolidation and extension, to ensure that there is no complacency and that adults are deployed effectively to support high quality progress in learning. Increasing independent learning and creating effective learners for the future sits at the heart of how we approach learning. Assessment is built into lessons in a sympathetic and structured way. Staff look for formative evidence of progress during the learning and use a variety of ways to test and extend knowledge and understanding. Progress trackers are used to support good planning, so that all learning activities are pitched at the right level. Pupils are consistently challenged to make progress and are supported well to be able to attempt new learning. Individual Learning Portraits are in place for all pupils and teachers use these to plan how to overcome key barriers to learning. Pupils are confident in their learning and expect to achieve.

Learning is not limited to the classroom or the timetabled day. There are many opportunities to learn in the local community and elsewhere. Our Learning 4 Life curriculum is designed to make sense of the world of work, leisure and home. We expect to support pupils to access social time effectively and to make good choices. We have recently introduced horticulture, with the addition of a polytunnel, and a flexible and adaptable KS4 curriculum choice around "Skills".

All pupils in year 9 took part in a challenging and physically demanding activity week in the summer, taking on challenges and supporting each other to overcome fears and barriers. The KS4 enterprise project is developing strongly, with pupils leading and influencing the development. The Valley Theatre offers an enriched curriculum and links with the community, as it becomes a recognised resource and centre of excellence in the town.

Our Creative Curriculum Week supports pupils to embrace change and to take part in workshops and performances in all areas of the Arts. Staff have also been challenged to learn new skills and to share these with pupils. Our instrumental provision enables our pupils to achieve in a variety of musical disciplines, including voice, keyboard, drums and guitar. Offering colour, number and shape models, as well as traditional notation, has allowed all pupils to access musical forms.

Year 11 pupils are extending their learning by working, on a weekly basis, on a developing alternative curriculum, with more time being made available for accreditation in practical subjects. This, in addition to the links with the local colleges, is effective in preparing them for post 16 choices.

In 2019, we have launched a new focus for our curriculum entitled "Cracking the Learning Code", focusing on developing the skills to become exceptionally good at being a learner, with the combined elements of

- C** = **Curiosity** – the desire to learn and find out as much as possible about the world
- R** = **Resilience** – the ability to turn setbacks into springboards
- A** = **Access** – literacy, numeracy, using technology, listening, interaction, negotiation
- C** = **Confidence** – self-belief, self-esteem, being comfortable with who we are
- K** = **Knowledge** and skills

Although robust monitoring shows that teaching is good overall, the number of outstanding lessons continues to increase. The very small amount of inadequate teaching is being addressed and actions taken are rigorous and supportive.

The personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils OUTSTANDING

OBJECTIVE :

For all members of the school community to act as effective, caring and empathetic learners at all times.

The behaviour of our pupils is exemplary. Despite the challenge of high levels of social, emotional and mental health needs, our pupils are able, over time, to develop good self-awareness, self-discipline and caring, empathetic behaviours. They are increasingly able to make good choices and to use technology safely and caringly. Pupils are caring towards each other and towards others in the community. Pupils are able to take turns, share spaces with each other and to listen to each other in order to learn effectively.

Bullying is rare, but pupils know that it will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils often need help to understand the extent to which the behaviour of other pupils is or is not relating to them as they are prone to misreading social signs. However, the ethos of "different for different" and the school's commitment to celebrating difference allows them to be understanding and tolerant of others. The "Values" curriculum supports moral and social development and is the basis of our KS4 RE curriculum, where we celebrate the ways religious and non-religious communities embrace shared values.

Year 10 pupils choose how to use the money they raise each year in the Enterprise project and they often choose to benefit the whole school in some way as well as individual rewards. With a key value for each half term, assemblies, form-time and the rewards system are being used to promote embedded values. Pupils leave The Valley School feeling confident and with considerably higher levels of independence than previously expected by them or by their families. Whilst at the school, almost all pupils are able to be part of the Performing Arts experiences on offer, either as performers, lighting technicians, sound engineers or "front of house".

Pupils are supported, in line with our "different for different" ethos, to become more resilient and to understand protective behaviours by the Pupil Listener Service, which also offers counselling and guidance for our pupils on a daily basis.

Outcomes for learners OUTSTANDING

OBJECTIVE:

For all pupils to make progress that is led by aspirational targets, based on very individualised understanding of every pupil's needs, barriers and potential

Pupils make outstanding progress. In comparison with pupils without special needs, our pupils make greater progress over a year, despite their low starting points. By breaking down the learning into very small and defined steps, it is possible to plan to meet the specific needs of each pupil. Pupils are highly successful in meeting their targets, such that targets continue to be set higher and more stringent to ensure that there is no complacency amongst staff. Pupils, or groups of pupils, who are not making adequate progress are identified swiftly and actions to improve progress are taken and monitored. Data drops happen at the end of each term and progress review meetings happen a week later. Root causes and relevant barriers are identified. Progress plans are formulated and lead to significant improvements. Summer 2019 external results were very impressive (see Appendix 2).

The use of staffing and resources

OBJECTIVE:

For all staff to be highly effective and properly deployed to meet the needs of the pupils, For all resources to be targeted strategically and used efficiently to support learning – vision and values of The Valley School to be central to all staffing and resourcing decisions

Staff are valued in their roles. Teams are strong and supportive, work well together and are grounded on mutual respect and teamwork. Constantly facing new challenges, staff are committed to professional development and to gaining new skills and knowledge to enable them to do the best for the pupils. All staff are trained to understand autism and attachment disorders. Access to ongoing training is facilitated with creativity. Staff are encouraged to engage in staff development sessions, research and support for each other.

Every effort is made to support staff to perform their roles without personal needs and concerns impacting on them. We work together to support each other and to care for each other. Staff feel confident to approach senior leaders to discuss professional and personal issues and report that they feel supported and understood. Staff attendance has improved over the last year and several staff have records of 100% attendance. In previous years, there have been no staff with 100% attendance.

Staff morale is high and staff respond to appraisal as a positive and developmental experience. They are focused on improvement and push themselves to do their best. Skills are extensive and wide-reaching. We face some staff turnover each year, but creative solutions and a strong recruitment process continues to ensure high quality staffing, with an overt commitment to never compromising the needs of pupils. We continue to be fully staffed and to attract high quality staff. Several Learning Partners are pursuing routes to become qualified teachers.

There is a formal induction process in place, with clear roles and responsibilities. Buddies and Mentors support staff members who are new to the school or new in post. We have yet to evaluate how effective this has been and it will continue to be reviewed and adapted as required.

Within the confines of a very challenging financial landscape nationally, we continue to balance our budget and to be creative and strategic about how money is used to enhance learning opportunities for our pupils.

The development of the school premises to meet the needs of pupils and their learning

OBJECTIVE:

For the school premises to meet the needs of our current provision and to be able to support future developments (post 16, independent living etc.)

The Valley School is situated in very pleasant grounds with generous space. The school was originally built as a mainstream secondary school for 700 pupils and offers space and specialist resources. Overall, the building is now in a very poor state of repair, although our pupils remain very positive about it and have little awareness of the issues we face, due to our strong focus on improving the cosmetic appearance of the school to ensure that our pupils feel valued and have their basic needs met. Colours have been used to create cohesion and calm around the school. Pupils have been fully involved in creating bright graffiti around the school.

The heating system in the school is inadequate, as are the ventilation and drainage. There is an extensive flat roof, which has many leaks and has only had patched repairs over several years. We are close to securing funding for a full re-build, but there remain high levels of challenge around keeping the current building going.

Classrooms follow the principles of best practice in primary schools and in NAS guidance. Classrooms are often zoned to support better understanding of different stages of learning. The variety of pathways on offer means that we can offer very different classroom environments for the different needs of the groups.

We face significant financial challenge, especially if our plans for growth are capped by unrealistic capacity decisions. Academy status is hampered by complex building issues and lack of clarity about other site users. We are trying to resolve these issues with the Local Authority, but this is problematic and has significant impact on our financial future. Despite budget restraints and changes to funded numbers, we are committed to using public money wisely and creatively. We are working within our budget and we are hoping for a fairer contribution from other site users to ensure our ongoing stability.

- Appendix 1 Accreditation Offer
- Appendix 2 Exam Results 2018
- Appendix 3 Progress report 2017-2018
- Appendix 4a Progress Data KS3
- Appendix 4b Progress Data KS4
- Appendix 5 Post 16 Destinations
- Appendix 6 Independence