

Inspection of Valley Gardens Middle School

Valley Gardens, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear NE25 9AQ

Inspection dates:	19 and 20 November 2024
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since June 2013. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is an exceptional place to learn. Staff are highly ambitious for all pupils and have created a culture of excellence. There is a bold artistic, creative and academic curriculum at the school. Pupils are resilient, reflective and confident. They rise to the school's expectations and achieve highly across a wide range of subjects. The school has done significant work to ensure disadvantaged pupils achieve as highly as their peers.

Pupils are polite and conduct themselves in an excellent manner. They value their education, work hard and attend well. Staff and pupils share warm, positive relationships where problems can be openly discussed. This helps pupils to stay safe and report concerns they might have. Pupils are kind and respectful. They have a strong understanding of those who are different from themselves.

Staff go above and beyond to ensure pupils achieve or exceed their potential. Pupils are passionate about doing their best. A vast range of extra-curricular clubs take place each week. Many pupils, including the most disadvantaged, take part in one or more of these. A large proportion of pupils learn a musical instrument. Pupils thrive because of these opportunities.

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

The school has created a carefully planned and highly effective curriculum. Pupils have the precise skills and secure knowledge to prepare them for their next stage of education. The topics that pupils learn in different subjects complement each other strongly, for example in history and drama, where the origins of the theatre are explored.

Staff are knowledgeable and passionate. They teach the school's rich and varied curriculum with enthusiasm. Pupils are confident and articulate because they are encouraged to express themselves in their work. There are regular opportunities for pupils to revisit what they have previously learned. Staff are highly effective at ensuring that pupils understand what they have been taught. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils share a passion for reading. Pupils read frequently for pleasure and experience challenging new texts with the support of staff. Pupils read independently on a regular basis and talk with enthusiasm about the books they have enjoyed. Pupils at an early stage of learning to read get the help they require to read confidently.

Provision for pupils with SEND is exceptionally strong. The specially resourced provision at the school is highly effective at supporting pupils with SEND academically. The school ensures that pupils with SEND engage fully in the wider life of school. Leaders have created additional support for pupils who find attending school a challenge. This work has been highly effective at engaging vulnerable pupils back into education.

The school's personal, social and health education curriculum is precisely tailored to the needs of the pupils. It is regularly adapted to respond to local and national issues. Pupils develop a clear set of values and a sense of moral purpose. They take action to protect their local environment, for example by planting trees on the school grounds. The school deliberately teaches pupils about the importance of developing a strong character, for example by showing kindness and respecting others.

The pastoral care of pupils at the school is excellent. Staff know pupils well and always act in their best interests. Regular opportunities to participate in a wide range of sports significantly benefit pupils' mental and physical well-being. The school offers a remarkable range of enrichment opportunities. These include workshops on finance, enterprise, engineering and survival skills, in addition to foreign trips and local theatre visits. Careers information and guidance inspires pupils for their futures.

Leaders are reflective and regularly engage with parents, carers, pupils and staff on a range of issues. Staff benefit from highly effective professional development opportunities. Staff appreciate the school's focus on their well-being. Governors support and challenge the school effectively to ensure that it continues to provide an exceptional standard of education and pastoral care for pupils.

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.

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	108636
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10322963
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	772
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Nisbet
Headteacher	David Godfrey
Website	www.valleygardensmiddle.org
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 June 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- The school uses one alternative provision. This provision is registered with the Department for Education.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

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

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority. One inspector met with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, art and design, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils and teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in science, computing and drama.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for careers education at the school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experience in lessons, enrichment opportunities and what it is like to attend the school.
- Inspectors met with early career teachers and those who mentor them.
- One inspector met with the leaders responsible for reading across the school.
- Inspectors examined the school's behaviour records, spoke to pupils who had been suspended from school and spoke with providers of alternative education.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. They looked at a range of documentation, including education, health and care plans and individual learning plans. Inspectors also checked how pupils with SEND are supported in lessons. One inspector visited the additionally resourced provision.
- 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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in corridors, at breaktimes, at lunchtimes and in lessons. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors considered the responses from parents and carers to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments submitted via the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

John Linkins, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Morris	Ofsted Inspector
Lindsay Oyston	Ofsted Inspector

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