

Inspection of VLC

St Margaret's Centre, 103 Whitnash Road, Leamington CV31 2HB

Inspection dates: 30 November to 2 December 2021

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

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

VLC is a friendly school. Leaders know that pupils' education has been difficult in the past, so they do all they can to create a safe and welcoming environment. During their time at the school, pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. By the time pupils leave, many are determined to gain good qualifications.

Good relationships exist between staff and pupils. Pupils behave well. They are respectful and courteous. They enjoy school and they feel safe. Bullying is rare. Pupils say that when it does happen, adults deal with it well.

The school aims to 'change the lives of young people through education and care'. Parents and carers are positive about the school's work. They say they have found a school where their children are happy and settled.

Staff know pupils well. They understand how best to help pupils. Pupils benefit from support to meet their individual needs. They get regular feedback from their teachers. This supports their learning well.

Pupils have plenty of opportunities to enjoy sports and outdoor education. Interesting visits and visitors widen pupils' knowledge and experience and help to develop their social skills. These opportunities include going to the theatre and to a local café.

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

Leaders ensure that pupils study a curriculum that prepares them for their next steps. Pupils study a broad range of subjects in depth. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 study Shakespeare as part of English lessons.

When pupils join the school, leaders make checks on what pupils know and can do, including how well they read. Teachers then use these checks to map out the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn over time.

Reading is prioritised. Leaders know which pupils need extra help. Leaders make sure that pupils get the right reading support. This is helping to improve pupils' confidence. However, leaders do not do enough to promote a love of reading. For example, the library does not look inviting. They know that there is more to do to promote enjoyment of reading.

Leaders plan the delivery of most curriculum content in a logical order. In most subjects, precise skills and knowledge pupils need to know and remember are clearly set out. This allows teachers to check that all pupils are keeping up with the subject. However, this does not happen in all subjects. As a result, teachers sometimes decide for themselves which key facts and ideas to cover. While these lessons provide pupils with interesting activities, they do not always build pupils'

knowledge effectively over time. This hinders some pupils from achieving as well as they should.

Pupils' social and emotional skills improve well over time, including pupils in alternative provision, because leaders make this a priority. Teachers know how to support pupils with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those with social, emotional and mental health needs. Leaders set out clearly the steps pupils and teachers need to take to ensure pupils' social skills improve. This is making a positive difference to pupils and their families.

The school is calm and orderly. Teachers have conversations with pupils following any incidents of poor behaviour. These conversations help pupils to think about how they could handle these incidents differently. Staff persevere with pupils. As a result, pupils' behaviour, over time, improves. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend well. All pupils have improved attendance compared with their attendance at previous settings.

Pupils say they enjoy physical education because they know it is good for both their physical and mental health. They also know how to eat healthily. Leaders prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils, for instance, learn about different faiths and visit different places of worship. In addition, they have a wide range of opportunities to taste food and experience music from different cultures. This helps pupils to develop positive attitudes to people different to themselves.

Pupils contribute positively to society. They have, for instance, painted a church bench that was dilapidated, and have tidied a wood pile in the community wood. Leaders make sure that pupils develop an understanding of democracy. For example, pupils meet councillors to debate issues that are important to them.

Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for their adult lives. They have consulted parents and set in place the new curriculum for relationships and sex education. Teachers include careers education in curriculum lessons as well as providing pupils with individual careers interviews in Years 10 and 11. The vast majority of previous pupils have moved on to further education or apprenticeships.

Leaders ensure that all staff have continual professional development. Staff appreciate this. Leaders are considerate of their welfare. They take into account staff's workload when developing new policies. Staff feel privileged to work in this school.

Governors have suitable skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles. They make sure that their statutory duties are met. For example, they have ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders are keen to ensure that the school continues to improve. They seek advice and support from external partners. This support helps the school to keep on improving. Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding policy is displayed on the school's website and meets the requirements of the independent school standards. Staff are confident in how to deal with a concern about a pupil's welfare. During the pandemic, the school remained open. Sometimes, when pupils did not come into the school, leaders went out to their homes to ensure that children and families were safe and had as much support as possible. Leaders check staff's suitability to work with children before they start to work at the school. Leaders work well with other agencies to protect pupils in their care.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Not all plans are set out as well as they should be. Plans in some subjects do not set out the essential knowledge that leaders expect pupils to know and remember. This means that teachers sometimes decide for themselves which key facts and ideas to cover. However, it is clear that leaders have already taken action to plan next year's curriculum and to train staff in how to deliver it. For this reason, the transition arrangements have been applied. Leaders need to ensure that all curriculum subjects are carefully planned and identify the key knowledge pupils are expected to learn.
- Leaders have not done enough to promote a love of reading. This is a barrier to pupils reading widely and often. Leaders should take steps to ensure that reading is well promoted in subjects and across the school.

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.

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

School details

Unique reference number	148032
DfE registration number	937/6028
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10192409
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	9 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	13
Proprietor	VLC
Chair	Rev. Brian Nash
Headteacher	Amanda Woodward
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,000 to £29,000
Telephone number	07340 820 763
Website	www.lvlc.org.uk
Email address	karen.raby-calvert@lvlc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- VLC is an independent school that caters for pupils with a range of needs. These include cognitive, specific and moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and mental health needs, speech, language and communication needs and autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The trustees run three alternative education provisions for 11- to 16-year-olds, one of which is based on the school site.
- The school offers a small, calm centre with a focus on therapeutic care, restorative behaviour management and high academic standards.
- Although the school is operated by a Christian charity, it does not have a specific religious ethos. This was the school's first standard inspection since it was registered by the Department for Education in October 2020.
- The school makes use of two unregistered and one registered alternative provision provider.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

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 leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, the deputy headteacher, the chair of the governing body and governors.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in English, mathematics, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and groups of pupils to talk about their learning and looked at examples of pupils' work in each subject.
- The lead inspector carried out a tour of the premises to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors examined policies, schemes of work and curriculum plans, as well as documentation relating to health and safety and first aid. They reviewed the school's self-evaluation document and the school development plan.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the principal, who is the designated safeguarding lead, to discuss safeguarding procedures. The lead inspector also scrutinised safeguarding documentation, including the school's single central record. She also spoke to staff about their knowledge of how to safeguard pupils.

- The team inspector held a discussion with the special educational needs coordinator about planning and provision for pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to the senior ethical inclusion practitioner from Warwickshire local authority.
- The lead inspector spoke to one parent in person and two parents on the telephone. She also took account of the text responses from parents on Ofsted Parent View. She also took account of staff views during interviews.

Inspection team

Mary Maybank, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Christopher Stevens

Her Majesty's Inspector

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