

School inspection report

4 to 6 June 2024

The Village School

2 Parkhill Road

Belsize Park

London

NW3 2YN

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders at all levels provide pupils with an environment in which they can thrive academically, physically and emotionally. Effective implementation of policies and appropriate oversight by governors promote pupils' wellbeing successfully and encourage pupils' appreciation of the values of openness, tolerance and respect for others.
2. Children in the early years benefit from committed leadership and carefully planned teaching which ensures they make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Children's personal, social and emotional development is enhanced through study of the humanities and pertinent topics such as environmental change.
3. Older pupils benefit from a wide-ranging curriculum and an effective extra-curricular programme, which enable them to extend their knowledge, skills and interests. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate support so that they progress well.
4. Teachers' assessment of the pupils' work is thorough and includes targets which they use to help pupils progress. However, leaders do not always monitor the progress of different groups of pupils effectively to help them determine any need to provide them with further support.
5. Leaders and staff successfully encourage pupils to show respect for each other and other members of the school community. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their physical and emotional wellbeing. Effective behaviour management ensures that behaviour in the classroom and around the school is positive.
6. Leaders encourage pupils to take responsibility for aspects of school life, helping to build their confidence and self-esteem. Leaders respond promptly to any concerns voiced by pupils and manage all aspects of health and safety effectively. As a result, pupils feel emotionally and physically safe in school.
7. Leaders provide effective opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of wider British society. Pupils' enthusiastic involvement in charitable work, through fundraising and physical activity, contributes positively to their social and economic education. Pupils learn to appreciate the value of working within their local community.
8. Appropriate staff training and thorough proprietorial oversight ensure that safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively. Leaders check the suitability of adults working at the school and teach pupils how to stay safe, including when online.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- monitor the progress of different groups of pupils more effectively to better determine where further support might be required.

Material change request

9. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include pupils aged 11 to 14.
 - Proprietors ensure there is an appropriate curriculum, based on effective plans for each subject, which meets the pupils' needs. Leaders' have planned a suitable curriculum, including appropriate personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and careers guidance for pupils aged 11 to 14. Leaders liaise effectively with parents to identify and meet the needs of pupils who have SEND and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The planned arrangements are likely to meet the individual needs of pupils in Years 7 to 9.
 - Teachers provide carefully planned, engaging and effective teaching which enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills. Pupils who have SEND are identified promptly and specific targets and support are put in place so that they make good progress. Teachers ensure that pupils who speak EAL receive appropriate help in the classroom so that they make good progress with their English. Teachers model kind, courteous behaviour and apply school rules fairly. The school employs staff with expertise in teaching pupils aged 11 to 14. Teaching is likely to remain suitable once the proposed material change takes place.
 - Leaders ensure that pupils' work is assessed regularly and that pupils receive helpful feedback. Teachers provide targets directing pupils to further improvements. Assessment procedures are likely to remain suitable once the proposed material change takes place.
 - Leaders promote British values, such as those of mutual respect, democracy and the rule of law, effectively. Staff work collaboratively to create a culture which is open, tolerant and founded on positive relationships within the school community. The school's measures to promote the spiritual,

social, moral and cultural development of the pupils are likely to continue to meet the standard once the proposed increase in the maximum age of pupils takes place.

- The proprietor ensures that leaders have the skills and knowledge to manage the school successfully. As a result of governors' rigorous oversight, there are appropriate policies and procedures which are implemented effectively so that the wellbeing of pupils is promoted. Leaders have planned and prepared effectively for the admission of pupils aged 11 to 14. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards once the material change takes place.

10. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Governors and leaders work together purposefully to create a secure environment in which pupils can thrive. Governors ensure that leaders possess the skills and knowledge required to manage the school effectively and successfully maintain a caring community, in support of the school's aims. Leaders ensure that a warm, friendly atmosphere prevails, and promote pupils' wellbeing effectively.
12. Leaders prioritise pupils' emotional wellbeing. Through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme and assemblies, pupils are encouraged to take risks and understand that they can learn from their mistakes. Staff are vigilant and appropriately trained to support pupils' mental health and enable them to build their self-confidence and self-esteem.
13. Governors and leaders evaluate the school's effectiveness perceptively and set out detailed plans for its improvement. They take appropriate account of the effectiveness of resources and facilities and appoint suitable staff to work in support of the pupils' academic and pastoral best interests.
14. Governors visit the school frequently to observe lessons, discuss issues with teachers and pupils in order to understand their perspectives on school life and check that pupils make good progress. Governors' comprehensive oversight is supported through termly visits and meetings with leaders to check the condition of the premises, consider health and safety and matters relating to human resources and review risk assessments. As a result of these regular meetings, governors reassure themselves that Standards are met consistently.
15. Early years leaders review their department frequently to ensure that the curriculum and teaching successfully engage the children's interest and enable their good progress.
16. Leaders understand the importance of effective risk management and mitigation in promoting pupil wellbeing. They ensure systematic risk assessment of the school premises, educational visits and the threat of radicalisation. Staff identify potential hazards and implement appropriate control measures.
17. Leaders make suitable adjustments when required so that pupils who have SEND have access to the school's educational provision. They adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' learning needs and provide specific equipment to suit their physical needs. They ensure that the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including through the implementation of a suitable accessibility plan.
18. Leaders with safeguarding responsibilities receive appropriate training and work collaboratively with staff to ensure that safeguarding is effective. Leaders liaise with external agencies effectively, act on their advice and refer concerns to them when required. Governors provide effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures to ensure that their continued suitability.
19. Leaders communicate effectively with parents through the provision of regular reports and the informative school website which provides key information, including the safeguarding and complaint policies. The results of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile assessments are reported annually to the local authority.

20. Any concerns or complaints raised by parents are addressed promptly and effectively in accordance with the school's policy. As a result, there have been very few formal complaints over time.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Appropriately structured schemes of work, which set out suitable activities and clear learning objectives, are provided for the key curriculum areas. Effective plans take account of pupils' needs and contain clear direction for teachers to enable pupils to develop their knowledge and skills across different subjects effectively.
23. Teachers in the early years ensure that the youngest children have a secure knowledge of the sounds that letters make and basic numeracy skills. They progress from writing single words to producing whole sentences independently, learn different ways of making the numbers ten and twenty, and understand the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes, including cubes, cuboids and cones.
24. In English, skilled teaching enables pupils to use increasingly complex language to analyse literature. For example, younger pupils employ adverbs such as 'frustratingly' and 'annoyingly' in their analysis of characters in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Older pupils use similes and alliteration accurately and effectively in extended descriptive writing.
25. In mathematics, pupils move confidently from double digit addition in Year 2 to solving more complex word problems in Year 6 while knowledgeable science teaching builds their understanding of key concepts such as pollination. Teachers encourage pupils to show initiative and take responsibility for aspects of their own learning. As a result, pupils are able, for example, to collaborate in preparing an assembly performance involving dance, poetry and a quiz.
26. Enthusiastic teachers who know and understand the pupils well, provide carefully planned lessons which encourage pupils to reflect on their learning in order to improve. Teachers' subject expertise and effective use of varied resources enable them to support pupils' learning successfully. Carefully framed questions which draw on pupils' prior knowledge successfully build pupils' understanding. As a result, teaching enables pupils to make good progress.
27. Pupils engage enthusiastically with the creative and performing arts. Teachers adapt activities in art to the pupils' aptitudes ensuring good progress and giving them a sense of satisfaction with their work in fine art and pottery. Leaders give pupils regular opportunities to take part in musical theatre and drama productions through assemblies and plays. As a result, they develop their performance skills and learn to work with others towards shared goals.
28. Teachers' feedback, both verbal and written, celebrates pupils' achievement, thereby motivating them to maintain and strengthen their efforts. Insightful target setting also directs pupils to ways in which they can improve the quality of their work. This contributes to the good progress that pupils in all year groups make.
29. However, although there are regular assessments of pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, leaders do not monitor the progress of different groups of pupils as effectively as possible to identify where further support might be needed.
30. Leaders ensure clear processes are in place to identify and support pupils who have SEND. A comprehensive register of needs is complemented by detailed and personalised information about each pupil. This enables leaders to provide focused targets which are reviewed regularly and at least termly. The effectiveness of this procedure is enhanced by input from parents and the pupils

themselves, in addition to their teachers. Teachers use this information to provide effective support for pupils who have SEND. These strategies are consistently applied with the result that pupils who have SEND make good progress.

31. Leaders ensure that a personalised approach is taken towards each pupil who speaks EAL. Pupils are fully integrated in classroom activities, with additional resources made available when required to support their understanding of English, such as visual clues around the classroom. Teachers also provide specific individual support when needed to ensure pupils make progress with their development of language skills.
32. Leaders offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are open to pupils of all ages and encourage them to build on their interests and talents and develop new ones.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 33. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

34. Leaders prioritise the physical safety and emotional wellbeing of pupils. They encourage pupils to ask questions and raise any concerns with their form teachers, anonymously if they so wish, through 'worry boxes' which are in every classroom. Pupils are confident there is always someone they can turn to for help.
35. Starting in the early years, pupils develop their hand-eye coordination, running and movement skills through a carefully structured physical education programme comprising varied activities such as dance, gymnastics, touch rugby and netball. Leaders emphasise the importance of safety in the water and the swimming programme ensures that most pupils can swim 25 metres by the end of Year 3.
36. Well-planned teaching of relationships and sex education (RSE), which is one element in the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, stimulates pupil interest in topics such as human reproduction and healthy eating. Thoughtfully structured lessons help pupils make progress in understanding reproduction in plants before moving onto the human life cycle. Pupils learn about puberty and what makes relationships healthy. RSE content reflects current statutory guidance. Teachers make effective use of end of topic quizzes to check the pupils' understanding.
37. Early years teachers help children become familiar with school life and settle into school well. They encourage children to discuss their feelings and actively support the development of children's self-confidence. Curriculum time is allocated to teaching about emotional wellbeing so that pupils are helped to manage pressures, especially those which affect Year 6 pupils as they prepare for senior school entry. Leaders encourage pupils to understand that they can make mistakes, learn from them and take on new challenges. Leaders provide pupils with a range of responsibilities which enable them to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Year 6 pupils, all of whom have prefect responsibilities, apply for specific roles such as head pupil and house captains.
38. Staff promote pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics, such as disability and religious belief, in an age-appropriate manner across the school. Carefully selected books and stories enable and encourage early years children to begin to understand disability and different family structures. Leaders ensure there are books available in the library and for use in English lessons which enable older pupils to identify and learn more about themes such as immigration and racial discrimination. As a consequence, pupils relate ideas in the books they read to real-life contexts.
39. Clear expectations and consistent application of school rules contribute positively to the overwhelmingly positive behaviour evident in the school. Behaviour charts are used successfully to give pupils immediate feedback on their behaviour and help teachers monitor behaviour from one lesson to another. Leaders monitor and track behaviour carefully so that they can identify relevant trends and take appropriate remedial action. As a result, poor behaviour and bullying are rare and pupils feel safe and happy at school.
40. Suitable supervision of pupils is provided during the school day, including on the playground at break times and for after-school activities. Staff in the early years are deployed so that the staff-to-child ratios are appropriately maintained. Staff are present at the start and end of the school day to

supervise pupils and liaise with parents and carers. Adults are available to provide pupils with suitable support if they have any concerns.

41. Health and safety measures are implemented effectively. Leaders ensure the required maintenance and checks are carried out properly. As a result, the premises and accommodation are well-maintained. A suitable fire risk assessment, regular servicing of fire-fighting equipment, termly fire evacuation drills and appropriate staff training mitigate fire risks.
42. Leaders ensure suitable provision of first aid. An appropriate number of staff have successfully completed paediatric first aid training and first aid boxes in each classroom are well stocked and list individual medical needs of pupils.
43. Leaders ensure there is a robust system of recording admissions and attendance. Lateness and absence are tracked and appropriate action is taken, when required. The local authority is promptly informed of pupils leaving and joining the school during the academic year at non-standard times.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

45. Leaders successfully prepare pupils for life beyond the school and in wider British society. Initiatives such as 'cultural diversity week' and 'celebration of neurodiversity week', PSHE education lessons, presentations in assembly and focus on work within the local community encourage pupils to think about the needs of others. PSHE lessons on ethical issues such as the concept of universal rights help develop pupils' perception of right and wrong.
46. Leaders encourage pupils to show respect for diverse cultures. Teachers successfully develop pupils' understanding of tolerance through discussion of themes such as the importance of religious freedom.
47. Pupils' sense of responsibility towards others and contribution to the school community are developed through encouragement to bring ideas to the school council intended to support other pupils in the school for consideration. For example, changes to the dress code to allow baseball caps and leggings and the introduction of plant-based meals have been implemented as a result of ideas that pupils have presented.
48. Pupils are challenged annually to plan and develop schemes which support local community activities. This involves budgeting and project management. Pupils trial their ideas and the most popular are put into practice. As a result, pupils gain experience of using money in a practical way and support local charities, such as those concerned with the conservation of hedgehogs and their habitat. Pupils undertake other activities in support of the local community, such as raising money for the local food bank and writing to the local member of Parliament about litter.
49. Children in the early years develop their knowledge of money through role play activities and the well-planned numeracy curriculum which successfully teach them the value of different coins and notes. Older pupils develop this knowledge in mathematics and geography lessons so that they can calculate with money and convert different currencies. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of economic matters is further developed through participation in a national entrepreneurship programme.
50. Leaders and staff develop pupils' understanding of British values such as mutual respect, tolerance and democracy effectively. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is supported by lessons focusing themes such as the needs and treatment of refugees and the experiences of the Windrush generation. Pupils' awareness of democracy and British institutions is developed by PSHE education lessons, discussions in form periods, the debating club, and trips to the Houses of Parliament. Pupils also vote on the charities the school should support.
51. PSHE lessons and assemblies raise pupils' awareness of protected characteristics. Pupils engage with issues of physical disability and gender discrimination. Neurodiversity week celebrates those who have SEND and enables pupils to develop their understanding of the situations faced by some people.
52. Older pupils develop their sense of social responsibility by taking on specific leadership roles for which they have applied. Year 6 pupils, for example, select articles and essays written by other pupils for display on the noticeboards. With oversight from their teachers, they give house points to

pupils for work of high quality. Through this activity, teachers help pupils understand the importance of impartial judgement. Other values, such as equality, are explored in PSHE education lessons and the roles and responsibilities of people such as doctors and lawyers are thoughtfully considered through careers education.

53. Leaders provide effective preparation for pupils as they move to the next stage in their education. Staff engage children in Reception in discussions of their feelings about transferring to Year 1 and help put children at ease by enabling them to meet their new teacher and visit the Year 1 classroom. Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for moving onto senior school. They are suitably supported with interviews and specific teaching for the 11+ examinations. Leaders also provide suitable guidance on travelling independently on public transport and the safe use of mobile phones in public areas.
54. Pupils receive effective education about possible careers which begins in the early years when children learn about those working in medicine and law, for example. Year 6 pupils have a summer term programme which comprises weekly talks on possible careers such as film directing, financial journalism and interior design.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 55. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

56. Leaders ensure that the safeguarding policy reflects current statutory guidance and is implemented effectively. The safeguarding team respond to any safeguarding concerns swiftly and suitably, including by liaising with and making referrals to relevant external agencies when appropriate.
57. Safer recruitment procedures are rigorous and effective. Members of the safeguarding team interview candidates for positions at the school and all necessary recruitment checks are completed before staff and governors take up their appointments. A suitable single central record of appointments is accurately maintained. This record and personnel files are monitored monthly by safeguarding leaders.
58. Staff with safeguarding responsibilities are trained appropriately for their role. They ensure that other staff receive effective safeguarding training, including at induction. Leaders provide staff with updates and valuable pastoral information at staff meetings which take place twice each week. As a result, staff are confident in responding to concerns raised by pupils and managing allegations or low-level concerns regarding any adults working in the school.
59. Governors receive appropriate safeguarding training, including about online safety and the 'Prevent' duty. Governors with safeguarding responsibilities provide effective oversight, visiting the school at least termly to talk to pupils and staff, and conduct a check of the single central record of appointments and sample personnel files. Safeguarding is on the agenda for the termly governors' meeting and there is a rigorous annual review of safeguarding procedures and the safeguarding policy to ensure their suitability.
60. PSHE education and information and communication technology (ICT) lessons provide pupils with suitable information about how to stay safe online. Pupils learn about the importance of not sharing passwords and using websites carefully. Appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place. Pupils feel safe in school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 61. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	The Village School
Department for Education number	202/6353
Address	The Village School 2 Parkhill Road Belsize Park London NW3 2YN
Phone number	0207 485 4673
Email address	admin@thevillageprepschool.com
Website	www.thevillageprepschool.com
Proprietor	Chatsworth (Village Prep) Ltd
Chair	Mrs Viv Thompson
Headteacher	Mrs Kirstie Hampshire
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	71
Date of previous inspection	11 to 13 February 2020

Information about the school

62. The Village School is an independent day school for female pupils. It is located in the Belsize Park area of the London Borough of Camden. Since 2019, the school's proprietor has been Chatsworth (Village Prep) Ltd. The school is overseen by a board of governors.
63. There are 25 children in the early years, comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
64. The school has identified 22 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
65. English is an additional language for 16 pupils.
66. The school states its aims are to ensure every child achieves their potential through exceptional teaching tailored to their needs and meaningful, exciting experiences within a safe, supportive environment where staff and parents work in collaboration. It seeks to instil in the pupils respect for religious, moral and cultural values, tolerance of other races, religions and ways of life, and recognition of the rights of all.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

4 to 6 June 2024

67. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

68. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

69. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

70. This is the first inspection of the school by ISI. The school was previously inspected by Ofsted.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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For more information, please visit isi.net