

Inspection of Vallis First School

Milk Street, Frome, Somerset BA11 3DB

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 June 2025

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a rapidly improving school. It is now in a position of stability and rapid improvement. Pupils and staff are proud to be part of a warm and welcoming community. They care for the school and each other. Everyone feels valued for the contribution they make.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils trust staff to look after them and they feel safe in their care. Pupils receive effective pastoral support. This helps them to enjoy school and settle well into their work.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff apply these consistently. They expertly support pupils who need extra help to manage their feelings and actions. This helps pupils to understand and follow the school rules to be 'ready, safe and care'.

The school has high ambition for pupils. It supports pupils to achieve well and encourages them to think about their future careers and aspirations. Pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences that builds their understanding of the world beyond the school. Trips to the local river and to historical sites help to bring the curriculum alive. The school prepares pupils well for their next stage of education.

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

The school has worked at pace to address previous weaknesses in the curriculum. It has reviewed and updated the whole curriculum to clarify what pupils need to know in each subject. The curriculum is carefully organised to help pupils build knowledge over time. From the start of the Reception Year, there is a sharp focus on developing vocabulary and language. This is resulting in children building strong communication skills.

However, in some subjects, some pupils do not gain a deep understanding of the curriculum. In these subjects, the tasks that pupils complete are not well matched to the learning that the school wants pupils to secure. Additionally, due to gaps in their knowledge, some older pupils find new learning more difficult. This is because the school does not check well enough that pupils have secured the prior learning they need to successfully grasp new ideas.

Staff have the expertise to deliver the reading curriculum well. They support pupils from the start of the Reception Year to successfully build their knowledge of sounds and words. Pupils who need extra help receive effective support to become confident and fluent readers.

Since the last inspection, there has been significant improvements to the implementation of the mathematics curriculum. Leaders have taken effective action to address the lower than national outcomes seen in the multiplication tables check last year. Current pupils get plenty of practise to build their times table fluency well.

The school has improved the early identification of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers now act quickly when they become aware that a child may need extra help. Staff provide pupils with SEND with the right additional support and adaptations, so they can access the curriculum alongside their peers.

Pupils are attentive during lessons and listen carefully to staff. They join in whole class activities and engage with each other well during paired activities. They are enthusiastic to share their ideas. Pupils play well together across year groups. They move around the school in a calm and orderly manner.

The personal development curriculum has been recently reinvigorated. Pupils build their understanding of the world beyond the school, and this helps them to understand the lives of others. Through high-quality texts, from the start of the Reception Year, children learn about people who have made a difference in the world.

Pupils build their knowledge of fairness and equality by learning about equal rights through learning about women's rights and black history month. They explore the work of musicians and artists from around the world. This supports pupils to value difference and celebrate difference.

Through their leadership roles, pupils develop their character by helping others. They are proud of the contribution they make as librarians, 'nurse assistants' and on the 'spick and span' team. 'School ambassadors' have enjoyed working with the town council. They have shared their ideas about how the local area can be improved.

The school is working hard to address any attendance concerns. This work is having a positive impact and pupil attendance is improving.

Governors have a strong commitment to the school and its development. They share the vision of all leaders to continually improve the school. They are ambitious for the school and ensure they use their monitoring activities to check the school's effectiveness and impact against its priorities for improvement.

The school has a carefully designed professional development programme for staff. This supports staff to develop their curriculum knowledge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, older pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This makes it hard for pupils to build new knowledge securely. The school should ensure that staff

use effective strategies to identify, and address, gaps in learning so that pupils secure their knowledge well in these subjects.

- In some foundation subjects, the tasks that pupils complete do not match well enough to the learning pupils need to secure. This makes it difficult for pupils to secure their knowledge. The school should refine task design so that it is sharply focused on the most important content that pupils need to learn.

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	123644
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10344526
Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Holly Lawton
Headteacher	Georgina Muxworthy (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.vallisfirstschool.org
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 September 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher joined the school in September 2024.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school provides a breakfast club.

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 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 discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, and subject leaders.
- Inspectors met with governors, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 lessons and around the school site.
- An inspector spoke to some parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments, and Ofsted's survey for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Caroline Musty, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Phil Minns

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