

## Context

The Voyage Learning Campus (VLC) is the only Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) serving the North Somerset local authority. The provision supports students from KS1 to KS4 who are unable to attend mainstream schools, either because they have been permanently excluded or because of medical needs. It is based on two sites in Weston Super Mare and is made up of 3 phases:

Phase 1 – PEX provision for KS1-Y7 students

Phase 2 – PEX provision for Y8-11 students

Phase 3 – all through medical tuition

Places at the VLC are commissioned through the North Somerset Inclusion Panels. Currently, it is not usual practice for schools to request fixed term placements, other than for medical tuition. There are 80 places within the PRU and 27 places within medical tuition. Students join throughout the year and in most cases have experienced significant disruption to their education prior to starting to us with the VLC, either because of repeated suspensions, Managed Moves/Off Site Directions, or medical problems resulting in low attendance.

In September 2024, the numbers of students on roll were:

	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Phase 3</b>	<b>Overall Total</b>
<b>Total</b>	9	49	31	89
<b>Dual Reg</b>	1	5	28	34
<b>Male</b>	6	32	7	45
<b>Female</b>	3	17	24	54
<b>EHCP (in final or draft)</b>	5	12	9	26
<b>Pupil Premium</b>	9	30	13	52
<b>CLA</b>	0	2	1	3

These numbers change during the year as more referrals are made by mainstream schools. The school has noted rising needs amongst the children referred, either due to complex safeguarding concerns or unidentified SEND.

The previous Principal, who had been in post since September 2019, obtained a role out of county and left at the end of the academic year 2022-23. The current principal was acting as interim Principal last academic year and was appointed to the substantive role in June '24. As a result of the appointment and the interim uplift of staff there will be some changes to the leadership structure over the academic year 24-25.

The school's funding from the local authority is being reviewed this academic year, to reflect the changes to the school's intake. The school now takes more students who have EHCP and more challenging SEMH needs. The changes to the school funding and the number of places that are commissioned by the local authority reflect the changing landscape for Alternative Provision and SEND in North Somerset.

The school was graded 'good' in its most recent Ofsted inspection in July 2022

(<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/22/138455>). There is a growing and committed Management Committee, and the current Chair has been a member of the Management Committee since November 2011. There had been

significant changes in the makeup of the Management Committee, but it is now more stable and is fully cognisant of its responsibilities around monitoring and overseeing the budget, as well as the strategic leadership of the school. Ofsted commented that the "Management Committee has an informed and accurate view of the school."

The school is keen to establish strong links with wider education and local community. It is a member of the North Somerset Inclusion Panels, working collaboratively to support children and young people to successfully access mainstream provision. The school is working to develop proactive links offering outreach support prior to PEX. This has been positively received by mainstream primary schools. The school is looking to increase its outreach to the secondary sector to prevent PEX and to support smooth transitions for the students who can return to mainstream or are moving towards Specialist Education. This academic year, there will be several pilot schemes to work with students who have been identified as risk of PEX through Inclusion Panel. VLC will be working with secondary schools across the county to support students in the transitional years of Year 7, 9 and 11 primarily, to address key issues associated with transition and to reduced suspensions and PEXs.

The VLC works closely with the local authority and are strengthening their relationship with North Somerset SEND, ROTH (Risk Outside the Home), the YOS team (Youth Offending and Prevention Service) and the central team of North Somerset. The VLC are fundamental to the North Somerset Education Strategy, specifically Pillar 6 objective 1 (*'Redevelop the scope for the Voyage Learning Campus -our PRU and medical tuition- to support a wider cohort of children'*). However, there is a role for the VLC to play in the realisation of the whole strategy, which is reflected in our School Development Plan.

### **'How do we support all students who work with VLC so they are successful in their transitions?'**

This academic year, we have framed our School Development under the Driving Question '**How do we support all students who work with VLC so they are successful in their transitions?'** This is the second year of a five-year plan to ensure that all stakeholders understand the role they play in realising our mission statement:

'At the Voyage Learning Campus, our mission is to enable our young people to achieve more than they believe is possible and to develop the skills needed to have choices to lead active, fulfilling lives. We try to achieve this by providing a safe, nurturing, holistic learning environment to support students to thrive personally and academically.'

### **Quality of education - Good**

#### **Intent**

The curriculum for students at Voyage Learning Campus is designed to enable all students to feel safe and motivated to learn, and to grow independence and skills to take beyond school. A review of the curriculum took place in 2023-24 which has created a shared ethos and vision amongst the curriculum leaders in all 3 phases; the curriculum is made up of 3 interdependent elements which aim to meet the academic and social emotional needs of all learners.

The core ensures that students develop their literacy and numeracy with the ambition of being at least in line with their peers. There is a continued commitment to ensuring students leave numerate and literate with those core skills in place to move into the next stage of their education. This was noted by OFSTED, who commented that the school places 'a high importance on identifying gaps in pupils' learning and addressing these quickly'. VLC has two teaching assistants whose roles are dedicated to delivering academic and social/emotional interventions to targeted students who have been identified through assessment and/or induction.

In addition to this, the curriculum intends to be flexible in support of individuals strengths, skills and needs. Whilst OFSTED recognise that the tailored and individual approach to learning is effective there is a whole school focus on

developing knowledge and understanding of specific SEND so teaching addresses the learning needs of students. We are developing the way we teach Executive Functioning Skills to support our individual students' needs: by developing bespoke Executive Functioning Skills targets for all our young people so that they have the strategies to become independent learners. These skills are being developed through Faculties in the classroom and have been set as appraisal targets for teachers.

The wider learning element ensures students access a broad range of subjects. The personal development element 'wraps around' the whole school is a crucial element of both the taught and wider curriculum. In Phase 2 there is now a need to develop a 'pathways' approach to support the diverse needs of the students with more alternative and vocational opportunities. This academic year, we are trialing our 'Passport for Life' curriculum and intend to roll this out across the whole school in 25/26.

Last academic year, we undertook a review of the pathways through the curriculum and the use of assessment to ensure students can access the right 'pathway'. This is to address the recommendation from the OFSTED report that Leaders need to ensure that staff have the right knowledge and understanding of pupils' specific needs so that they are more precise in the adaptations they make to learning.

The development of the VLC SEN Database started in 2022/23. The database has been developed to ensure that best practice, key information and updates on assessments regarding the specific SEND needs of our students are shared with all staff. By addressing the recommendation from OFSTED 2022 that 'Teachers do not always address specific learning needs when teaching the tailored and individual approach to learning,' we are making sure that we are needs focused and giving the students the support they need to make best progress.

In January '25 we will be entering the second year of our rewritten Literacy Policy; this has a clear intent to improve the standard of literacy provision across the phases and curriculum. To support this, all teachers are expected to complete 20% of their personal CPD on Improving their skills to deliver quality first literacy teaching in their classrooms regardless of subject. We are spending our INSET Days and have allocated one CPD session a term to focus on embedding the strategy across the school. In December '24, The Literacy Focus group are delivering a CPD session to all staff to increase staff confidence and expertise when it comes to delivering and supporting reading in the classroom. We will then be focusing on the development of tier 2 and 3 vocabularies across the subject areas.

### Implementation

All subjects are taught by subject specialists; increased curriculum development time ensures that teachers have good knowledge of their subjects; this is enhanced by an ongoing training programme for support staff to ensure that they can work effectively in and out of class. A VLC Teaching & Learning Toolkit was created in 2021 with staff to develop a consistent approach to teaching and learning across the school. This year we are developing this through faculties by embedding executive functioning skills into faculty resources. Each faculty has reflected on areas of executive functioning that poses a barrier for students in their subject area and are collaborating on creating resources to promote and embed Executive Functioning skills into the fabric of lessons. For example, the Maths faculty are focusing on task initiation and developing working memory, English are focusing on planning and organisational skills Lesson observations and work scrutiny take place across the school, with clear focus on the areas we are addressing through CPD (namely the embedding of Literacy in the classroom, Executive Functioning skills and trauma informed approaches.)

Staff are mindful of the challenges many of our learners face and work hard to engage them, planning lessons that meet students at their current levels both academically and socially/emotionally, with learning strongly scaffolded so

that students develop confidence. Ofsted inspectors reported that “staff are creative in adapting learning to overcome any barriers pupils may have” and “teachers... effectively address gaps in learning.”

The Thrive approach has a positive impact for our learners. For example, a visiting Educational Psychologist commented that teaching “prioritised student safety and emotional containment over learning, and in by doing so enabled the students to engage fully with the tasks presented to them...to ensure challenge and development”. The school is a Thrive Centre of Excellence, the Thrive approach is being shared across all phases. Ofsted also acknowledged that ‘pupils have what they need to ‘thrive personally and academically’ in line with our values and mission. This is largely supported by our implementation of the Thrive Approach. In a press release, our Thrive Regional Manager referred to Voyage Learning Campus as “a special place where staff and pupils have worked hard together to create a positive and nurturing learning experience. It’s an inspiring school that works proactively...and it really deserves to be seen as an exemplar of good practice’.

Reading and literacy development is prioritised in all phases. In Phase 1, if in KS1 or working at this level, students follow ‘Unlocking Letters & Sounds.’ This allows for teachers to continually assess students’ phonics skills and target areas for improvement ensuring a systematic approach. Students read daily and books are chosen to match phonic ability and incorporate key word reading skills. Ofsted identified that ‘Leaders prioritise pupils learning to read. Staff have the expertise to teach phonics so that pupils can read increasingly complex texts. Leaders are developing a culture where an enjoyment of reading is promoted’. The revised Literacy Policy has set out a clear timeline of how the school will implement additional strategies to ensure that we are developing a culture of reading over the next academic year.

In Phases 2 and 3, students are assessed on their current literacy and numeracy levels on entry and then twice yearly – Students, who are below chronological age, are targeted for interventions in several ways: those who are working significantly below their peers, those who have a noticeable gap in a core section of literacy and/or numeracy skills, those who have a specific literacy or numeracy difficulty. We offer Catch Up Numeracy, That Reading Thing and IDL literacy & Numeracy interventions, and this year we will be introducing Catch Up Literacy. These academic interventions are targeted and evidence based.

Literacy focused activities are embedded in lessons and there has been a focus on improving oracy in tutor time/supported breaks through the development of an activity programme. As part of the whole school literacy, strategies such as Word of the Week are used across all faculty areas to support students in developing a vocabulary. The aims of the Literacy Policy are to embed a clear strategy on implementing a consistent approach to the way that three tiers of vocabulary are used across the phases and faculties. This is initially being introduced and led by middle leaders, with the support of SLT.

### Impact

Outcomes at KS4 show continued success with GCSE outcomes fairing very positively when compared with national PRU data. The range of qualifications offered is broad and offers flexibility. Accreditation ranges from GCSE to ABC Motor Vehicle and Cooking skills, ELC certificates, Functional skills, life skills certificates such as food hygiene and First Aid plus an increase in the number of students who achieved numerous AQA Unit awards which have been incredibly successful at building confidence and self-esteem.

Overall results show a similar trend to 2023 with a slight increase in the percentage of students who achieved 5 GCSEs or equivalent at Grade 1+. Art continues to be a real strength, with excellent results up to grade 7 and 8 in

photography and 60% 9-4 within Art and Design GCSEs achieved by some of our young people. Citizenship results were also pleasing with some student grading highly in this subject area. Increasing the number of students who sit 5 GCSE or equivalent is a priority raised previously and will continue to be an area of improvement. When comparing data against national PRU data for 2023, all GCSEs show percentages in line or above national PRU data at 9-1 and 9-4.

	% 2023-2024	% 2022-2023	% 2021-2022	% 2020-2021	% 2019-2020
<b>Measure</b>					
5+ GCSEs or equivalents 9 – 4 (inc English and Maths)	5	12	9	23	8
5+ GCSEs or equivalents 9 - 1	45	21	16	38	14
4+ GCSEs or equivalents 9 – 1	50	36	44	58	47
2+ GCSEs or equivalents 9-1	75	78	88	80	89
1+ GCSEs or equivalents 9 - 1	90	88	94	88	97
1+ pass in any qualification or award	95	97	100	98	100
9-4 in GCSE or equivalents English and Maths	10	18	13	30	22
9-1 in GCSE or equivalent English and Maths	65	61	69	73	83

Students across Phases 2 and 3 can undertake work experience placements, which support them to develop work-based skills and competencies to ensure successful transition into post 16 pathways. There is a range of established work experience placement that are offered to the students. Our WEX coordinator also finds WEX experiences based on students' interests so that they have a wide range of work-based exposure: these vary from one off visits, speakers coming into school or a fixed period of WEX placement. Increasing the opportunities for students to raise aspirations in an ongoing area of improvement.

Outcomes at Phase 1:

There were no Year 6 students in Phase 1 last year. So not End of KS2 SATA were taken. In terms of National Assessments, these were completed by our Year 2 and Year 4 students.

Four Year 4 students completed the Multiplication Tables check Four Year 2 students completed the Phonics Screening.

Overall breakdown of progress for all Phase 1 students (measured from each child's start point):

8 students make exceptional progress in Thrive. One made emerging progress as started in May 2022.

	Reading	Writing	Maths
Exceeding	6	3	4
Expected	0	1	0
Emerging	3	5	5

### **Behaviour and attitudes - Good**

Students in Phases 1 and 2 usually join the school having exhibited high levels of challenging behaviour in a mainstream setting; they have experienced exclusion or failed managed moves from more than one school, meaning they join us with low levels of self-esteem or belief in themselves. Their attitudes towards formal learning are often very negative and this has exacerbated since March 2020, due to increased levels of disruption to their education and lack of 'normal' learning since that time. The school works hard to change these attitudes and to help students improve their ability to manage their behaviours.

The school's Relationships and Behaviour Policy has 3 clear expectations for student behaviour – "Ready, Respectful, Safe" and is grounded in relational and trauma informed approaches. Work is ongoing to develop staff and students' understanding of this relational approach. However, the impact can be seen through the "key relationships" built between staff and students. Ofsted reported that "staff show empathy" and support students "to positively reengage when managing dysregulated behaviour." Ongoing trauma informed CPD for staff is further supported by training for the student support team in Team Teach, Emotion Coaching and Thrive. Two members of the senior leadership team completed the 'Trauma Informed Practice' training delivered by Dr Karen Treisman: this was offered to North Somerset schools by the Virtual School. The principal is on the course this academic year. The school continues its journey to ensure that trauma informed practice is fully embedded across the sites. The development of Pupil Passports and the consistent use of IBPs/PSPs means that individual strategies are known and used for students. There is now a consistent approach across the phases to ensure that all students have a target for attendance, academic progress and personal development target that addresses their specific need in this area.

Relationships between staff and students are frequently positive. The development of the school council in Phases 1 and 2 is giving students a voice and making them feel like active members of the community, building their trust in the adults working with them. Incidents of physical aggression are low in number across the whole school, although there has been a higher need for physical intervention in Phase 1, due to some aggressive or unsafe behaviours from a small number of students. These are robustly monitored and appropriate support/interventions put in place to address this. Although students' language can be rude and abusive on occasion, reparative and restorative approaches are used to address this. There are very few incidents of bullying or peer on peer abuse. Parent Voice shows us that they feel their children feel safe in school.

Overall, Fixed Term suspensions increased slightly during 2023/24, compared to year 2022-23. This was due to larger numbers of students being PEXed from mainstream schools over this year (47 students PEXed in 2023/24 compared to 24 in 2022/23). The most common reason for students' suspensions was physical or threatening behaviour. This was particularly an issue in Phase 2 because of the number of PEXs due to aggressive behaviour and the number of students who were known to each other and had history of violence between them. VLC are working with MACS (Multi Agency Child Safety), taking a lead in developing the North Somerset Graduated Response that will be shared with all mainstreams in North Somerset and working closely with mainstreams school to prevent PEXs, increase knowledge of negative peer relationships and establish pre-emptive measure to address this.

	Total	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
T1	18	2	16	0
T2	14	2	12	0
T3	15	4	11	0
T4	19	5	14	0
T5	14	6	8	0
T6	11	7	4	0

Attendance is below national average as might be expected, given the vulnerabilities of the cohort and attendance within PRUs nationally, however, the school had higher rates of absence than the national average for PRUs in 2022/3. This figure is particularly impacted by medical tuition provision, where recorded attendance was 35.3% during Terms 1-6, however, this is reflective of the needs of the students who require highly differentiated and reduced provision because of their medical and mental health need. Parent Voice shows us the impact of their child's referral to our provision, "my child was not attending school at all and the support given here, combined with the much smaller setting and drastically fewer students gave her the confidence to attend most of the time."

During the 2023/24 academic year, attendance fluctuated across each phase

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	National Data for Pupil Referral Units 2022-23
Sims Data (based on 25 hours a week timetable)	66%	49.3%	35.3%	60.2%
Actual Data (based on how much of offered provision students are attending)	91.2%	74.8%	78.7%	
Authorised Absence	33.2%	40.5%	64.3%	22.2%
Unauthorised Absence	0.5%	9.6%	0.3%	17.7%

The school is committed to ensure that student attendance increases and has developed a term by term 'Improving Attendance Plan' as a key thread in the school's Development Plan to ensure that all stakeholders understand their role in ensuring student attendance is the best it can be.

### **Personal Development - Good**

Personal Development is one of three key elements to the VLC curriculum : 'Pupils' wider development runs through every aspect of school life' (OFSTED 2022). In the summer of 2021, the school was named a Thrive Ambassador School, reflecting the positive work being done to develop students' resilience and emotional regulation. Members of Phase 2 have completed the Thrive course 'Rupture, Repair, Relate Cycle' to embed the 'Thrive' approach in the work that we do with adolescents to build strategies for life in 2023-24. Phase 3 staff are starting their journey on the 'Rupture, Repair, Relate Cycle' this academic year.

Mental health and wellbeing is a priority area to support students to **achieve more than they believe is possible**. A wide number of staff have completed Mental Health First Aid training and in Phase 3 there is a strong working relationship and collaboration with CAMHS. A range of strategies are deployed including bespoke PSHE lessons, adapting the curriculum to include nurture/enrichment slots. The school promotes the use of Kooth, an online counselling service, to support students' mental health and wellbeing and work is ongoing with the School Nursing Team, Barnardo's and Off the Record, a local counselling provision. Feedback from the local authority safeguarding audit commented "it's clear that... mental health and wellbeing are big priorities in your school" (Sept 2020). In addition to MHFA, the student support team have undertaken Emotion Coaching training and the school is part of the Mentally Healthy Schools Hub.

Pastoral support is a strength across the school; all students have a key tutor or targeted support in Phase 1 from their class teacher 'Pupils know that staff are invested in them and interested in what is important to them' (OFSTED 2022). There is regular contact with parents and carers who talk positively of the "phenomenal level of care" that their children receive. Key tutors and Heads of Centre build good relationships with families, making regular contact, frequent home visits, and offering support with strategies for home and engagement with external agencies. The school is regularly represented and involved in Bournville One multi-agency group which means that often additional support is identified and implemented to keep students (and their families) safe.

'Leaders focus on preparing pupils for the next stage in their education'(Ofsted 2022) '. There is an active school council which helps students understand the impact of participation in their community, alongside 'High-quality personal, social and health education (PSHE) (Ofsted 2022) and Citizenship curriculums, which promote knowledge and understanding of the rule of law, celebration of religious festivals and other diverse events, tutor time activities and use of external visitors or providers e.g. Tender (Healthy Relationships), and Avon & Somerset Police Diversionary Activities. Through the wider curriculum staff work with students to develop their character and resilience, becoming reflective learners and develop their ability to express emotions appropriately.

Students are frequently provided opportunities to be involved in staff appointments and to discuss their views with others e.g. members of the management committee, North Somerset councilors and representatives of the local authority. There has been training delivered so when prejudiced or discriminatory language is used, staff are able to challenge this effectively with students to ensure that they develop a greater appreciation and respect for difference.

VLC students have played an important role with the North Somerset SEND Council attending meetings, acting as student voice with a SEND Film to increase knowledge and understanding of student perspective and attending other activities relating to promoting SEND etc.



Careers advice and guidance is individualised for students with support for college visits and applications. Additionally, many students at KS4 enjoy successful work experience placements which help them develop skills for the workplace. The success of this work can be evidenced in NEET data and an improving picture regarding exam outcomes at KS4. Work with the Careers Hub is again widening opportunities and upskilling staff to deliver appropriate careers advice and guidance in school including information about apprenticeships. The Gatsby Framework is used to benchmark and evaluate the school's careers provision and work in this area has seen good progress in all areas and this work is proactively supported by the Chair of the Management Committee. Currently all areas of the Gatsby Benchmark are 100% except for Benchmark 3 (since data related to leavers' destinations is not currently stored for 3 years after they leave the provision.)

### **Leadership & Management - Good**

The school has a strong vision, underpinned by our school values, that is shared by all stakeholders. There is clear commitment to supporting vulnerable and at times, challenging, young people to help them secure positive outcomes as they progress through their educational journey. Ofsted reported that "there is clear ambition for all pupils" and that staff are "determined" to provide students with a positive experience of education so that they can 'achieve more than they believe is possible'.

Communication with the whole staff body is regular, despite the challenges of 3 distinct teams working across 2 sites. There are regular opportunities for staff voice and leaders consider pressures on them, and this is positively received. Staff Voice shows us that they feel supported and valued, and that relationships in the school are good. For example, one member of staff reported, "expectations for all are clear and realistic underpinned by a genuine feeling of care". Staff tell us that they are proud to work at the school.

Staff are positive about CPD opportunities and records show that staff have engaged in a wide range of external training. There is a planned and coherent CPD programme which is clearly linked to the School Development Plan, which is well received with 94% agreeing that leaders ensure that there is relevant and effective CPD to develop staff.

There is a skilled and active Management Committee that provides appropriate support and challenge to leaders in the school. Membership is diverse and members bring a range of relevant experience to their role enabling them to hold school leaders to account. Additionally, the committee engage well with training opportunities provided by governor support services and use this to ask challenging questions of the school in meetings. The finance and staffing committee are provided with monitoring and have oversight of the budget, which is now much strengthened, ensuring the long-term financial future of the school. A Local Authority audit conducted in September 2021 commented that their minutes "show robust challenge" and that a "good governance structure is now in place at the Voyage Learning Campus, which enables the Management Committee to provide a clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction, holding the Principal to account for the educational performance of the school". This was supported by Ofsted in July 2022.

Safeguarding in the school is effective and Ofsted recognised that "leaders ensure that safeguarding is a high priority." Feedback from the North Somerset Safeguarding in Education Officer stated the school has a "really focused ...persistent and consistent approach to safeguarding across the school" and considers "the best way to promote a safeguarding culture". They also identified "great practice" and "compliance with all the statutory requirements".

All staff have completed safeguarding and Prevent training and safeguarding issues are regularly discussed in meetings to ensure staff remain alert and up to date in their knowledge and understanding. The use of CPOMs supports good record keeping and information sharing. It also facilitates early identification of concerns, and the trained DDSLs are

quick to provide early help and support, through engaging with parents and carers, and using the expertise of SLT and the Family Liaison Officer. There is strong engagement and collaboration with local partnerships through the Bournville One team meeting, ROTH and the North Somerset Inclusion Panel (Primary and Secondary). This ensures local safeguarding issues are known and can be fed back into work with the students. Safeguarding processes, such as safer recruitment, site safety and management of visitors are robust.

### **Overall Effectiveness – Good**

The provision at the VLC has significant strengths.

Systems for safeguarding are in place and there is a strong culture of safeguarding amongst staff. There is highly effective multi agency working for example the school is part of the Bournville One multi agency group, MACS, as well as engagement with the wider education community through the North Somerset Inclusion Panels.

Leaders, staff and the management committee are united in a shared vision for supporting students into the next stage of their education journey successfully.

Across the whole school there is a growing sense of a shared curriculum vision and its intent. Faculty leaders are working more effectively as a group to develop a shared ethos in phases 2 and 3 and staff are working to develop a progressive curriculum model, underpinned by strong assessment and baselining on entry to the school.

On leaving the VLC most students have secured destinations and life chances are significantly improved from those likely at the time of their referral.

Relationships between staff and students are strong and there are few incidents of bullying or discriminatory behaviour.

Areas to develop include:

Improve student outcomes by supporting students to make academic progress.

Strengthen relationships to ensure high levels of student engagement and improve attendance.

Embed professional expectations and a culture of ongoing development for all staff.

Through our work in these areas we will address the Ofsted areas for development:

To ensure that staff have the right knowledge and understanding of pupils' specific needs so that they can be more precise in the adaptations they make to learning

To work collaboratively across the 3 phases to impact positively on learning for all pupils