

# Portfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113942
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	357451
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mick Megee

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	55
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Macgee
<b>Principal</b>	Andrew Thomas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 May 2009
<b>School address</b>	Parley Lane Christchurch BH23 6BP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 573808
<b>Fax number</b>	01202 580532
<b>Email address</b>	portfield-school@twas.org.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	2–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 November 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	357451

**Boarding provision**

**Social care Unique Reference Number**

SC026914

**Social care inspector**

Brian Mcquoid

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**Age group** 2–19

**Inspection dates** 10–11 November 2010

**Inspection number** 357451

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and observed eight teachers. Inspectors also held meetings with staff, parents and a representative group of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, its plans for improvement, records relating to safeguarding and the school's data on pupils' progress. The inspectors took into account three questionnaires from parents and carers and also read questionnaire responses from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How well different groups of pupils enjoy and achieve in lessons.
- How effectively teachers use assessment information to set challenging targets.
- The quality of the curriculum and support given to pupils so that they achieve the best they can and are prepared well for their futures.
- How the current leadership team is maintaining the school's capacity to improve.

## Information about the school

Portfield School is part of a voluntary organisation called The Wessex Autistic Society. It provides education and boarding for pupils with autism and related communication difficulties. Some pupils have additional difficulties such as challenging behaviour and hearing impairment. The main school is located near to the town of Christchurch in Dorset, and post-16 students attend the Life Skills Centre on a separate site in Christchurch itself. A few pupils are provided with regular mainstream integration experiences. Most of the pupils attending the school are from Bournemouth, Poole or Dorset but the school also draws pupils from ten other local authorities from across southern England. During the inspection, there were no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has been awarded accreditation from the National Autistic Society. The school is currently without a headteacher, following the resignation of the previous headteacher in August 2010. The Director of Services for The Wessex Autistic Society has taken over the headteacher's role, until a new appointment is made.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

- Portfield School is a happy school that provides its pupils with a good education, and good support. As a consequence, pupils make good progress in their learning and personal development, despite their complex learning and communication difficulties. A typical comment from a parent was, 'My son always looks forward to going to school and since he has been at the school he is a much happier child.'
- Leaders and staff are strongly committed to removing barriers to learning and this is reflected in all the school's work. Leaders, managers and the governing body are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and have effectively tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. This strong track record, together with a conscientious self-examination of where they could do better, means that the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.
- The good quality of teaching ensures that pupils are well engaged in their learning and make good progress in the great majority of lessons. The small groups, coupled with the skilful management of pupils who become anxious and unpredictably upset, are very strong features of teaching. Classroom staff and specialist staff, such as speech and physiotherapists, work very closely and effectively together and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning and personal development.
- In a few classes, teaching is satisfactory rather than good. Occasionally in these classes, some whole-group activities move at too slow a pace, a few more-able pupils are insufficiently challenged or learning targets are not given sufficiently high priority. These factors limit some pupils' progress.
- The school is assiduous in assessing pupils' development and in collecting progress information in lessons. However, the system for tracking pupils' development from year to year and for setting individual learning targets is over-reliant on individual teachers' judgements, and tracking reports are not sufficiently user-friendly. The school recognises this and there are plans in place to bring in more effective systems that will enable the school to present its information more clearly and to compare its pupils' progress information with that of similar pupils across the country.
- Pupils enjoy school and attend well because they feel very safe and because the curriculum provides a good range of stimulating experiences for them to develop their personal and communication skills. This enables every pupil to gain nationally recognised qualifications for their work by the time they leave.
- The school provides a remarkably calm and peaceful environment for learning. Pupils are happy because they are cherished and valued as unique individuals. There are very respectful and affectionate relationships between adults and pupils.

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- The consistently caring approach, coupled with well-targeted support, means that pupils feel confident knowing that they are able to approach adults with any concerns or worries they may have.
- n The school makes good boarding provision available to the pupils, and there are several outstanding aspects including the quality of communication between residential and school staff.
- Students in the post-16 provision make good progress in their lessons and in their personal development. The provision's central location provides ample opportunities for students to participate in their local community through visits, shopping and fund raising. The timing and recording of statutory reviews does not fully meet requirements.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- By July 2011, strengthen the quality of the school's procedures to track progress and set targets by:
  - making more effective use of national comparative data to allow the benchmarking of attainment and progress for both individual pupils and cohorts within the school ?
  - presenting analyses in a user-friendly way that meets the needs of all those who require access to such information.
- Ensure that pupils make the maximum possible progress in all lessons by:
  - presenting work at a good pace that always challenges pupils, especially the more able
  - ensuring that all pupils are productively engaged throughout lessons, particularly in whole-class activities ?
  - referring regularly to pupils' individual learning targets throughout the day.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils make good progress overall from their starting points, although their learning and other difficulties mean that they do not reach the levels of attainment reached by pupils of a similar age nationally. They make good progress in literacy, numeracy, and in their personal and social education. Classroom staff work well with the speech therapy staff to attend to the pupils' communication and language development, so ensuring good progress in these areas. Pupils' progress in the development of their computer skills is less strong, although good use is made of communication devices where this is appropriate. Pupils clearly enjoy learning, try their best and work hard in lessons so that they gain new knowledge and quickly develop their skills and understanding. When they have been successful, pupils show pride and pleasure in their achievements encouraged by sensitive and positive feedback from staff. There is little discernible difference in the achievement of the different groups of pupils in the school, including boys, girls and those from minority ethnic groups. However, a few pupils, particularly the more able, are held back where there is less effective teaching. Students in post-16 leave school with a good range of qualifications.

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Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. They demonstrate increasing maturity as they get older. Most pupils enjoy participating in new experiences which expand their learning, although a few pupils become bewildered and upset if there are unexpected changes in routine. In these circumstances, staff are patient and sympathetic and take great pains to give reassurance and comfort, so that pupils' resilience is increased. Pupils develop a keen sense of right and wrong, behave well and form positive and constructive relationships with others. They enthusiastically take part in cultural and artistic activities.

Pupils have a good knowledge of how to live a healthy life, as a result of the good support they receive in this area. For example, at lunchtimes there is an innovative card system by which pupils are guided to make sensible, healthy choices of meals. Pupils are very enthusiastic about sports, including swimming and horse riding. Pupils feel safe and secure in school and they say that bullying is very rare. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to their own community, although there is not yet a school council. The school recognises this as an area for further development. Pupils are well prepared for the future given their above average attendance and their good acquisition of basic skills, especially in communication and relationships.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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## How effective is the provision?

Teaching staff are very committed to getting the best from the pupils. Teaching is invariably in small groups or one-to-one. This is of great benefit to the pupils because the staff have a good knowledge of how individual pupils prefer to learn and what strategies can be used in order to motivate them and keep them on task. As a result, pupils feel treasured and safe. Those pupils who have the greatest anxieties are very effectively managed by staff who look for every opportunity to re-engage them with the lesson activities as quickly as possible. Most staff ensure that they give instructions that are accompanied by the use of pictures, symbols and other aids to make sure that pupils understand the work. There is a little inconsistency in this and in a few lessons there are problems with lack of pace and the lack of emphasis on learning targets. The school has a wealth of assessment information and this is generally used well by teachers to plan lessons. In one or two classes, activities do not always sufficiently stretch more-able pupils.

The school provides pupils with a good range of enjoyable and relevant learning experiences. Pupils are allocated to one of three groups in each class, according to their attainment levels. This good practice enables the staff more effectively to teach sets of similar abilities within a key stage or year. Through the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme, there are good opportunities for pupils to develop self-awareness and to learn about health and safety matters. The school provides increasing opportunities for integration and inclusion. A small number of pupils take part in lessons in mainstream schools and this supports their learning well. There are frequent, interesting educational visits, for example to the New Forest and the London Eye. A good range of visitors, such as an African drummer and a climber with his mobile climbing wall, add extra dimensions to the pupils' learning experiences. The school does not currently offer pupils in Key Stage 3 sufficient opportunities to experience a foreign language.

There is strong team work between all the different agencies who work with the school to the benefit of the pupils. There are very good communications and collaboration with the residential staff, many of whom work in the school during the day. This ensures that there is tight planning underpinned by a good, shared up-to-date understanding of each pupil's needs, experiences and development. Expert staff carefully assess each pupil's personal and social needs so that there can be specialist support in the classroom. All the different assessments are not yet brought together in a way that is user-friendly, especially to new staff and parents. Good care is taken to ensure that the school provides a safe environment.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>



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## **How effective are leadership and management?**

Significant changes have taken place within the school over the past year, including the change in the structure of the leadership team and the departure in the summer of 2010 of the previous headteacher. A new headteacher has not yet been appointed. However, the continuing effectiveness of leadership, management and governance can be seen in the way in which the new Director of Services, together with the senior leadership team, has ensured that good progress and appropriate development have been maintained during this transitional period. The Director of Services is providing fresh insight and is developing high aspirations, enthusiasm and a new vision within the staff. Leadership and management of post-16 provision are satisfactory, but less effective than in the main school, because of the long-term absence of key staff. The governing body, senior leadership team and other leaders and managers successfully ensure that the school community shares a strong sense of ambition and purpose. They demonstrate a 'can do' approach in their search for innovative solutions to identified problems. They effectively promote higher quality teaching and assessment through developing good practice. The governing body makes good use of its experience and professional backgrounds to challenge and support the school effectively.

The school successfully promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well and has ensured that all groups of pupils achieve equally well within a secure and happy environment. All staff are working together efficiently as a team to provide the very best support for pupils so that all can continue to achieve well.

Safety procedures are well understood by staff who are well trained in safeguarding and child protection. Suitable procedures are in place to ensure that everyone coming into regular contact with pupils is suitable, although the school has had to correct one or two minor administrative weaknesses in the documentation.

The school makes a satisfactory contribution to promoting community cohesion based on its recent analysis of its socio-economic, religious and ethnic circumstances. The impact of the school's work can be seen within the school and in the way in which pupils with different needs get on well with each other. The school engages with a range of community groups beyond the school, particularly at post-16 level, but promotion of community cohesion at a national and global level is at an early stage of development.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

Students at post-16 level demonstrate that they enjoy their education by their good behaviour and high level of attendance. The curriculum offers students a good range of activities aimed at developing the skills they will need in later life. There are many opportunities to participate in the local community through shopping, road safety lessons and the use of public transport. When out in the community, there is a high priority on increasing students' skills and knowledge of how to stay safe. These socialising activities are underpinned by good preparation through drama and role play. There are numerous opportunities to undertake physical activities with a strong emphasis on being healthy. Teaching is generally good, although there are occasions where teaching assistants are underused and tasks do not sufficiently challenge all students. There is a good range of external links, for example with local businesses to provide valuable experiences in real-life workplaces. Students are offered the chance to achieve a good range of qualifications which lead on to further education or, in a few cases, employment. The long-term absence of key staff means that leadership and management responsibilities are not being as effectively covered as elsewhere in the school.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

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## Boarding provision

The school’s residential provision is judged to be good overall with several outstanding aspects. A very high standard of individualised care is made available to residential pupils. They are provided with a safe, child-centred environment within which they are protected from harm and where they are treated with respect as individuals. The high-quality staffing is a real strength of the school. Caring, committed and enthusiastic individuals make up dedicated staff teams in each house, who provide a consistency of care and who are skilled at meeting the needs of individual pupils. There is excellent communication and collaboration between residential and educational staff and the school's specialist support team provides invaluable support at home for the work being carried out with pupils.

Comprehensive individual plans for students are reviewed regularly and show clearly how pupils make significant progress in areas of their lives. Staff work very closely with parents and feedback from an annual parental satisfaction survey shows parents are very satisfied with the care provided for their children. Health care provision at the school is outstanding with the school's nursing staff providing an excellent oversight as well as facilitating the involvement of external health professionals whenever this is necessary. The residential provision is well managed; provision for staff induction and training is extremely good and there are established systems for monitoring the welfare of pupils. Consulting with pupils and providing them with choice in their daily lives is integral to how the school operates, and there is excellent provision for supporting pupils to acquire life skills and develop their levels of independence. There is one standard that requires action relating to the timing and recording of statutory reviews.

### National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- Ensure that where relevant, statutory reviews for students take place at the required intervals, with the results recorded on their individual files. (NMS 3)

*These are the grades for the boarding provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the boarding provision</b>	<b>2</b>
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## Views of parents and carers

The inspection team received a very small number of responses from parents and carers to the request for completed questionnaires. The school has already surveyed parents and carers this year, using a similar questionnaire to the Ofsted one, with a much greater number of returns. These were made available to the inspection team. A small number of parents also came into the school to talk to the inspection team. These sources of evidence taken together show that a very large majority of parents and carers view the school positively and are very happy with the school's provision. The inspection supports these positive views of the school. Many parents say how much they appreciate the high quality of teaching, leadership and management and the fact that the school works very hard to ensure that their children are safe and happy. They feel that the school listens carefully to their views and opinions. They believe that they are valued highly as partners in promoting their children's learning and development. Parents are positive about the

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school's care, support and guidance both to themselves and to their children. A typical comment from a parent was, 'The school supports us well, keeps us well informed and we find the staff easy to work with.'

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Portfield School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received three completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 55 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	33	2	67	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	1	33	2	67	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	0	0	3	100	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	1	33	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	37	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	1	33	1	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	2	67	1	33	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



12 November 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Portfield School, Christchurch BH23 6BP**

I am writing to let you know the outcome of the inspection of Portfield School. We enjoyed our visit very much. Thank you very much for meeting with us and telling us all the good things you do. We agree with you that the school gives you all a good education and the staff give you much that will help you in the future.

Once you are at the school, you feel safe, gain confidence in what you do and you put a lot of effort into your work. You are growing up very well and making good progress in your learning.

Staff work together well to give you good support so that you can get the best out of your education. They provide you with many interesting and valuable opportunities to learn, and the teachers are good at seeing that you have what you need to make progress. Talking to you, we could see that you really appreciate what the staff are doing for you.

There are a few things that still need to be done to improve your school. We have asked that:

- teachers check that you are making as much progress as pupils like yourselves in other schools
- there is a good pace in all lessons, activities are matched more carefully to what you need, expectations from all the teachers are high and you are helped a little more to know what next steps you need to take to improve.

You could help the teachers by trying to do even better in lessons and by volunteering to be on the school council once it is set up.

Yours sincerely

Mick Megee Lead inspector



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