

Wyvern School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113957
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	378773
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Mick Megee

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Kenwood
Headteacher	Sue Hoxey
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 September 2008
School address	Dorchester Road Weymouth Dorset DT3 5AL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who observed 14 lessons taught by 14 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with the school council, parents and carers, members of the governing body, therapists and staff. The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including a sample of pupils' files, teachers' planning documents and tracking and assessment data. Questionnaires from 32 parents and carers and 39 staff were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well different groups of pupils, particularly those with autism spectrum disorder or profound and multiple learning difficulties, enjoy and achieve in lessons.
- How effectively teachers use assessment information to set challenging targets.
- The quality of the curriculum, particularly for personal, social and health education.
- How the leadership team has improved the school recently and is continuing to increase the school's capacity to improve.

Information about the school

Wyvern is a Foundation Trust special school of average size which is co-located on a mainstream campus with a primary and secondary school. The school educates children and young people with profound or severe learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about average. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. There are twice as many boys as girls and almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and in September 2008 acquired specialist school status for cognition and learning.

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

Wyvern is a good school that provides good teaching and learning as well as outstanding care, guidance and support. School leaders and the outstanding governing body have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and what needs to be done next to make it even better. The headteacher has established a patent sense of purpose and direction to the work of the school securely linked to improvement. The senior leadership team and the governing body work very well together to ensure that good use is made of the school's specialist status and that there are clear priorities for further improvement. Parents and carers are extremely supportive and the school has developed an extremely good partnership with them, particularly through the family link worker. Staff want the best for each pupil and, through working very closely with families, make every effort to achieve this goal. One parent commented, 'We have been very impressed with Wyvern. The staff will literally go the extra mile, even bringing things round home that we have forgotten. The school always puts children first.'

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and their progress is good because planning, provision and resourcing for the curriculum are good and, as a result, children quickly develop independence in their learning. In the main school, almost all groups of pupils, including those with additional or more complex needs and/or disabilities, make consistently good progress through a well-adapted curriculum into which the new personal, social and health education (PSHE) scheme is carefully interwoven. Good progress continues into the sixth form, where there is good provision for students through a wide range of opportunities to acquire relevant qualifications that prepare them effectively for the next stage of their lives. Achievement in writing is higher than in other aspects of English and in mathematics, because of the school's intense focus on this area last year. Achievement in Key Stage 3 is not quite as strong as elsewhere in the school. This is because teachers' use of assessment and targets is not consistently skilful. Achievement for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, who have communication difficulties, is not as strong as for other groups of pupils. Lesson activities do not always take sufficient account of the pupils' language levels. Arrangements for the evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning are good. Consequently, the quality of teaching in most lessons is good.

All staff ensure that a strong moral code permeates the school. There is an intensive and highly successful focus on keeping pupils safe and feeling secure so that they rapidly develop self-confidence in learning and in trying out new activities. This

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feeling of security is reflected in pupils' excellent behaviour and, in turn, has a very positive effect on their good progress in most lessons. Pupils work hard and conscientiously. As they grow older, they take up an increasingly wide range of responsibilities in the school and make a good contribution to the school community, for example through the work of the school council. Parents and carers say their children really enjoy coming to school and this is evident in every classroom. The curriculum ensures that pupils receive a good variety of exciting activities and experiences. There are regular visits to venues linked with the current curriculum theme and a good range of visitors to school. Excellent care, guidance and support ensure that all pupils learn and develop confidence, regardless of their individual circumstances. A record of improvement since the last inspection, based on accurate self-evaluation, the school's ambition for continued improvement and the effectiveness of governance and leaders in driving improvement, demonstrates that the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of pupils in Key Stage 3 by:
 - improving the use of assessment in lessons
 - ensuring that lesson targets match the varying needs and capabilities of all the pupils in the class.
- Ensure that pupils with autism spectrum disorder who have communication difficulties make as much progress as possible by always providing lesson activities that take account of the pupils' language levels.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make good progress from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the sixth form, although their rate of progress is slower during Key Stage 3. All groups make similarly good progress overall, although for some pupils with autism spectrum disorder their rate of progress on occasions is slower. In one good numeracy lesson for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, the teacher and classroom staff maintained a very good pace throughout and, with energy and enthusiasm, made very good use of communication boards to encourage very high levels of concentration so that all pupils made good progress. Pupils with multiple and profound special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in lessons because of the timely, skilful assistance provided by class teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies. There is no discernible difference in the progress made by girls and boys in the classroom.

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and this enjoyment is clearly reflected in their exceptionally good behaviour. Pupils are very considerate towards each other and respond promptly to any additional guidance from staff about how to conduct themselves. Pupils show that they feel very safe by their confidence in unusual situations, for example when having a hydrotherapy lesson in the school's pool.

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Pupils' interest in health promotion strategies is reflected in the school's national award. Pupils understand what constitutes a healthy diet, although some continue to make unhealthy choices at lunchtime. Older pupils enthusiastically take on responsibility and play a very constructive role in the school such as helping children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school council meets regularly and has an increasing influence on decisions about school life. Coupled with their well-developed basic skills and average attendance, this prepares pupils well for the world of work. Attendance figures are lowered by a small number of pupils who have serious and chronic health issues resulting in frequent stays in hospital.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good across the school. Staff employ very effective and consistent strategies for managing the behaviour of pupils so that lessons are peaceful and purposeful, and pupils work hard. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and, in the small classes, of the pupils' interests and aptitudes. Teachers make effective use of information and communication technology in lessons, such as interactive whiteboards and communication aids, to motivate pupils and measure their understanding. There is well-focused classroom support by teaching assistants and therapists and, in the best cases, this support significantly enhances the quality of learning. In most lessons, teachers assess

¹ 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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learning carefully and provide work at the right level to match pupils' different ages and learning needs. Clear targets are set to help pupils reach a high standard of work. However, in a small number of lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3, target-setting is not sufficiently specific and this undermines the accuracy and usefulness of assessment, and holds pupils back. Pupils with more complex needs are supported well by staff who have received specialist training, although in a few lessons, the work set is too difficult for pupils who have poor language skills. This means that they do not make as much progress as they could.

The curriculum, including that for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and sixth formers, meets pupils' different needs and interests successfully, and is underpinned very effectively by the new personal, social and health education curriculum. Carefully tailored activities ensure that almost all groups of pupils can consistently learn successfully and whole-school themes are used well to connect subjects to make learning more meaningful. The curriculum is augmented by an interesting range of visits and visitors, together with a good variety of extra-curricular activities, all of which are much enjoyed by pupils. Collaboration with other schools is good, although opportunities for integration with the primary school on the campus have developed relatively slowly. The quality of care, guidance and support for all pupils is excellent. Every pupil is valued highly and cared for as an individual, and multi-agency links and the partnership with families are very strong.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her senior colleagues consistently communicate high expectations about how provision, teaching and learning can be improved. Consequently, the school, making good use of its specialist status, has continued to move forward since the last inspection. With the support of the whole staff and the highly effective and well-organised governing body, senior leaders have successfully tackled areas where they have identified underachievement. School staff work effectively together and alongside specialist staff from other agencies such as health and careers. There is regular monitoring and support by the senior staff that has resulted in good and improving teaching and learning based on increasingly accurate data.

The governing body is very influential in determining the strategic direction of the school and is fully and systematically involved in evaluating its work. Members of the

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governing body are frequently around the school checking informally and formally how well the school is doing. They are proactive in the joint governing body on the campus. They discharge their duties very effectively, as reflected in the exemplary quality of policies, procedures and practice for safeguarding pupils. Records of the suitability of staff to work in the school are completely up to date, and comprehensive risk assessments are developed for every eventuality. Child protection procedures are of a very high standard and all staff are appropriately trained.

The school has a highly positive relationship with parents and carers. This very effective liaison with parents and carers contributes significantly to improvements in pupils' achievement and well-being. The school promotes equality of opportunity well in all its work and is constantly alert to any variation in achievement. It is proactive in devising initiatives to overcome any identified weaknesses. The school promotes community cohesion within its own and the local community very effectively. Its strategy at the national and global levels is less well developed, although the school has plans to develop links with schools overseas.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

All the children in the class clearly like school and after only a short time have settled into the routines well, playing contentedly together and individually. They undertake a good mixture of whole-class and individual activities. The children work together well when staff encourage them, although staff sometimes miss opportunities for collaboration. The children take pleasure in learning and seeing new things and make good progress in developing their skills and knowledge across a wide range of areas of learning. Their overall achievement is good.

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Staff foster and maintain excellent relationships with parents and carers through home visits and daily contact involving home-school books and texts. Welfare and pastoral care arrangements are highly effective. Consequently, children feel safe and very well cared for. Staff are kind, sensitive and discreet with those children who require support for their intimate care. Staff place a strong emphasis on developing children's language and communication skills, although they occasionally forget to make their spoken meaning clear by giving additional cues such as signs or pictures. Children have free access to a secure outdoor area with a good range of free-choice and adult-led activities. This allows children to explore things with purpose and challenge and effectively fosters the development of their independent learning skills. However, this area is not sufficiently protected from the elements and it is not practicable in the cold weather, particularly for those with mobility problems.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective and the manager provides clear direction for her team. Adults have a good knowledge of the welfare requirements and the development of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The manager has developed good procedures for the long-term assessment and tracking of children's progress, involving all the support staff. Teachers' planning builds securely on regular, prior assessments of children's needs. All staff play their part in monitoring and recording children's progress on a day-to-day basis. Observations and achievements are gathered and recorded accurately in individual pupil profiles.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

Students at post-16 demonstrate that they enjoy their education by their excellent behaviour and good attendance. The school has developed a relevant and interesting curriculum that offers students many real-life opportunities to develop the skills they will need for independence in later life, such as cooking and shaving. The timetable affords them a range of experiences to participate in the local community through working in the community café, shopping, learning road safety and using public transport. When out in the community, or on a course at the local agricultural college, there is a high priority on increasing students' skills and knowledge of how to stay safe. Students undertake a good range of physical activities with a strong emphasis on being healthy. Teaching is generally good, although there are a few occasions when tasks do not sufficiently challenge all students, particularly the girls. There are good external partnerships, for example with the neighbouring mainstream

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school, to provide valuable experiences for learning and socialising. 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 new leader of the sixth form has successfully helped staff and students to develop a strong sense of community and responsibility. As a reflection of this, students have a clear understanding of how they can contribute their opinions to improve their life-chances.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers expressed close to full agreement with almost all of the statements in the questionnaire. In particular, all those who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they are happy with their children's experience at Wyvern School. Additional written comments were almost all very positive with particularly appreciative views expressed about parents and carers being very impressed by the school and receiving a lot of support from members of staff. There were a very small number of negative comments. An issue raised was that staff had ignored suggestions from parents and carers during annual review meetings. The inspection team found that the suggestions made by parents and carers are considered very carefully and, if appropriate, are almost always taken up.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wyvern 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 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 74 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	88	4	13	0	0	0	
The school keeps my child safe	28	88	4	13	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	63	12	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	59	12	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	75	7	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	63	12	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	66	11	34	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)	20	63	9	28	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	84	5	16	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	63	9	28	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	63	11	34	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	78	7	22	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	84	5	16	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



16 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wyvern School, Weymouth DT3 5AL

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and seeing you at work. We were very impressed by many things, but especially by your excellent behaviour, the way you work and learn so well together, and the way that all the adults who work at the school care so much for you. We are pleased to agree with you, your parents and carers, and your headteacher that Wyvern School is a good school.

These are the other main things we found.

- You make good progress because all the adults ensure that you feel happy and safe and enjoy your learning at the school.
- The staff teach you well and make sure that lessons are interesting. As a result, you become increasingly independent and well prepared for the future.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors work well together and with your parents and carers to make sure that you achieve well.

To help you all to achieve even more, we have asked your headteacher and staff to set targets that are easier to measure, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and to make sure that everyone has the right level of work.

All of you can help by continuing to do your best and working hard in lessons.

All the very best in the future

Yours sincerely

Mick Megee
Lead Inspector

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