

Sherborne Learning Centre

Simons Road, Sherborne, Dorset, DT9 4DN

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Sherborne Learning Centre transforms pupils' lives. One pupil said 'This place is good for second chances', and she was right. Parents and carers speak highly of the way in which members of staff help pupils to get on with others and get back on track with their learning. Leaders and managers have a very clear vision for the school and all staff share a sense of purpose and a high level of commitment to the pupils.
- Pupils make good progress and those in Year 11 leave with a range of GCSE examinations and vocational qualifications which help them to move on into further education or training.
- Teaching is good. Teachers know their pupils well and do a lot to re-engage them and help them to make good progress.
- Those pupils who are on roll but are supported off-site by outreach teachers and 'Dorset On Line' make rapid progress and some then go on to attend the centre as the next step on their journey back into school.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and show respect for each other, the staff and the environment of the school. They feel safe.
- The centre offers pupils a wide range of opportunities that contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as their physical fitness, alongside their academic studies. The opportunities include theatre visits, outdoor education, swimming, football, gym, climbing, basketball, sailing, cycling and dog walking.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to provide sufficiently high levels of challenge to all groups of pupils, particularly the most able and those with statements of special educational needs.
- Middle leaders are not all skilled enough to track the progress of the pupils effectively, monitor the quality of teaching and plan for improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven part-lessons, the majority of which were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team.
- The inspector held meetings with several pupils, members of the senior leadership team, leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the centre's work, and three members of the management committee.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school's own evaluation, improvement plans and data about progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work.
- Information about parents' views of the centre were not available from Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire because too few parents and carers had completed the questionnaire. However, the inspector took account of the centre's own surveys of parents and carers and spoke directly to three parents.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed by members of staff and the results of a staff questionnaire, which had been completed by seven members of staff.

Inspection team

Steve Williams, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sherborne Learning Centre was last inspected in the autumn of 2010, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The school is a pupil referral unit with 46 pupils on roll. Pupils come from a wide geographical area and most come into the centre by taxi.
- The majority of pupils attend the centre because they have either been permanently excluded or are at risk of being permanently excluded from their mainstream school.
- There are more boys than girls. One pupil comes from a minority ethnic background and no pupils speak English as an additional language. A significant proportion of pupils is eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for specific groups including looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families. The school has 12 pupils eligible for free school meals, three looked-after children and no children of service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well above the national average, as all pupils come into this category. There are 7% of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs.
- No current pupils are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for pupils who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2, because most pupils join the centre much later in their secondary school career.
- Pupils attend the off-site education provision on premises about five miles away from the main site. This has provision for vocational courses in construction and as well as the so-called 'countryside classroom'. Pupils are also able to learn about rural skills and have the opportunity to learn relevant skills on a working farm. Some pupils attend part-time courses at the Ancient Technology Centre at Cranborne, Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre (WOEC) or local colleges in Bournemouth and Poole. Some join the 'Equilibrium' programme provided by Equilibrium Youth Work, a community interest company and some attend the SPARC (Safer People and Responsible Communities) course throughout the year, run by the Dorset Fire and Rescue Service.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that a higher proportion of teaching is outstanding, by helping teachers to plan even more rigorously and provide the right level of challenge for all pupils, including the most able and those with statements of special educational needs.
- Develop the skills of middle leaders in tracking pupils' progress, monitoring the quality of teaching, and planning for improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is good because the majority of pupils make good progress during the time they spend at Sherborne Learning Centre. The small number of primary age pupils and younger secondary age pupils spend a short time on roll at the centre and are prepared for their next step – usually a return to a mainstream school. The larger number of Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress in their English and mathematics and secure qualifications in vocational subjects that enable them to move on to the next stage of their education or training, often at local colleges.
- Pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding make good progress and reach similar standards to other pupils in their work. Pupils with statements of special educational needs do not always make the same progress as other pupils, although they feel secure in the centre and rapidly develop their personal and social skills. More able pupils do not always make rapid progress in lessons because the work is sometimes not challenging enough for them.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills improve significantly while they attend the centre, and their creativity and practical skills are very effectively developed through their work in art, and design and technology.
- Pupils often take time to settle into life at the centre and this can be a particular challenge for some pupils with statements of special educational need. This means that pupils' progress can sometimes be slow to begin but improves rapidly as they become more settled. The centre's own tracking data show that 'settled' pupils make good, and often outstanding, progress.
- A number of pupils are referred to the centre for whom on-site attendance would be too much of a challenge. These pupils are supported off-site by outreach teachers and on-line learning through 'Dorset On Line'. As a result of the programme of support they receive, they make good progress and some of the secondary age pupils then go on to attend the centre as the next step towards re-integration back into school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers know their pupils well and manage them highly effectively. They have very positive relationships with their pupils. Pupils know that the teachers care about their personal development and their academic progress. As a result, pupils respond well in lessons and are usually eager to learn.
- Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and often show a real passion for their subject. This has a positive impact on the motivation of the pupils.
- Pupils learn best when they are challenged to think creatively, reflect on their learning and articulate and justify their opinions. For example, in one English lesson, Year 10 pupils were analysing carefully the opening sequence of the film 'Apocalypse Now' and expressing views on the impact of war on the psychology of military personnel. In a Key Stage 3 art lesson, pupils were creating designs in the style of Keith Haring, and assessing each other's work, making highly perceptive comments on how different moods are portrayed.
- There is a very effective partnership between teachers and their teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are carefully deployed, well managed and very supportive of pupils' learning.
- In some subjects such as art and design or design and technology, assessment practice is very strong, with teachers providing pupils with positive reinforcement for their successes and clear pointers for improvement. However, this is not consistently strong across all subjects.
- While teachers are very successful at engaging pupils in their learning, they are less successful at providing enough extension and challenge for the more able pupils and occasionally staff do not adapt the work thoroughly to meet the learning needs of the lowest attaining pupils, particularly those with significant levels of special needs.
- A few staff do not always provide enough support to sustain and develop pupils' literacy in their

lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Although many pupils were disaffected and disengaged before they started attending the Sherborne Learning Centre, most of these pupils subsequently develop positive attitudes to learning in lessons and a positive attitude to school. One pupil said that he 'used to hate coming to school' but now he enjoys coming and attends regularly. When asked what the centre had done for his son, one pupil's father said 'They have turned his life around'. He spoke about how polite and respectful his son is now and contrasted this with how he was when he started.
- Pupils show a respect for each other and for adults and for the school environment. Despite the challenges that many of the pupils face, disruptive incidents and anti-social behaviour, including bullying, are rare. There is no evidence of graffiti, litter or vandalism in the centre.
- Although overall attendance is low, pupils' attendance improves rapidly once they join the Sherborne Learning Centre. This is indicative of the success of the centre in re-engaging children and young people, including those who did not previously want to come to school.
- The centre places an enormous value on supporting pupils' personal development. Although many pupils take some time to settle when they first arrive at the centre, the support they receive to improve their readiness to learn enables them to make rapid progress once they are settled. Some pupils can become too dependent on the centre, but once the pupils are ready for transition, members of staff are very effective in helping them to move on.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and they feel safe in the centre. They know about different types of bullying, including cyberbullying, and what to do if it occurs. The requisite safeguarding policies are in place and they are reviewed on a regular basis.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have a very clear ambition and vision for the centre and all members of staff share the commitment to transform the lives of the children and young people referred to Sherborne Learning Centre.
- Leaders and managers check how well pupils are progressing and how well teachers are teaching and this is helpful in identifying the steps that need to be taken in order to improve. However, not all middle leaders have the skills to monitor achievement and teaching sufficiently systematically and thoroughly.
- The self-evaluation is shared with all staff and presents an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. It provides a good basis for planning improvements.
- Teachers are properly held to account through the process of performance management and they benefit from the support they receive for their professional development. The majority of teachers are highly experienced and have the opportunity to take on specific areas of responsibility.
- Leaders and managers work hard to provide an excellent range of learning opportunities both on-site and off-site. Pupils follow courses in English, mathematics, science and a range of other subjects including design and technology, art and physical education. The use of the outreach teachers and Dorset On Line Learning enables pupils to study a wider range of subjects than those normally offered at a pupil referral unit and the wide range of other activities including dog walking, power boating, theatre visits and catering enable pupils to follow a rich and varied curriculum.
- The school provides a highly effective programme of one-to-one mentoring to support the achievement of those pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding, and provides very effective in-class support to pupils with significant levels of special educational needs. This is an

important part of a wider strategy in the centre to promote equal opportunities.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The Management Committee has taken on additional statutory responsibilities since April 2013, and it is careful to ensure that all its statutory responsibilities are met.
- Management Committee members know the centre well and are rightly supportive and appreciative of the work of the centre.
- There is significant representation on the Management Committee of highly experienced senior leaders from local mainstream secondary schools, and this is helpful in enabling the Management Committee to start providing an effective level of challenge to the senior leadership team and improve pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	157090
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	426714

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

Type of school	All through
School category	Pupil Referral Unit
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	N/A
Appropriate authority	The Management Committee
Chair	Nicki Edwards
Headteacher	Ian Hedley
Date of previous school inspection	30 September – 1 October 2010
Telephone number	01905 814582
Fax number	01905 814582
Email address	ihedley@sherborne-lc.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

