

3 Dimensions

Chardleigh House, Chard, Wadeford, TA20 3AJ

Inspection dates 28–30 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Students thrive in a safe and nurturing environment. They learn how to keep themselves and each other safe.
- Teaching in reading, writing, literacy and numeracy skills is consistently good so that students make good progress in these areas of learning.
- Students that are more able successfully take GCSEs.
- Students gain a good range and level of qualifications in outdoor education activities.
- Older students are supported well to attend college and have work placements.
- Students are equipped well for life in modern Britain.
- The individualised curriculum allows students to thrive. It ensures that students develop good social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding.
- Students learn the basic skills to enable them to live independently, or semi-independently, after they leave school.
- Staff act as excellent role models and help students improve their attitudes to learning so that attendance improves and behaviour is good.
- Directors and leaders have maintained a good standard of teaching and achievement.
- The school complies with the independent school standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- History and geography activities are often too abstract. They are not as relevant to the students' day-to-day lives as they need to be in order to make learning more purposeful and secure.
- Not enough staff know or have seen what other similar schools do, so they cannot share best practice.
- Not all adults understand or know the students' next steps for learning in academic subjects. Consequently, they cannot help students to attain the highest level and grades in these subjects.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons and scrutinised samples of students' work in different subjects. She held meetings with the senior leaders and class teachers. Meetings were held with a social worker and a telephone conversation with a visiting therapist was undertaken.
- The inspector examined a number of school documents in order to check compliance with the independent school standards. These included the school's website, prospectus, policies, information about students' progress and the school's own evaluation of its work. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- There were not enough responses to the online Parent View survey for these to be analysed. The inspector took account of 10 staff questionnaire responses and spoke with students.

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- 3 Dimensions School is an independent special school that is registered to provide education for boys and girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and for pupils who have an autistic spectrum condition. All pupils have additional learning needs associated with the acquisition of basic numeracy and literacy skills and almost all have failed to thrive in their previous educational settings.
- The school opened in 2004 and is currently registered for 12 students between 11 and 18 years of age. Currently seven students attend, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is owned by 3 Dimensions, a registered company. It is set in a rural location near the town of Chard in Somerset. The company also owns three children's homes in the area, which provide residential accommodation for almost all of the students.
- The school uses any of the local further education colleges in the local area to meet the specific needs and interests of individual students. In the recent past, these have included Bicton College, PETROC College, Yeovil College, Somerset College of Arts and Technology, the South West School of Plastering and Paragon Skills for Industry.
- The school is overseen by a Head of Education. There are two class teachers, a Special Education Needs Coordinator and teaching assistants. A range of therapists visit the school to conduct one-to-one support for individual students as part of their individual education plan. The school does not have middle managers.
- The school seeks to develop students' communication, social and independence skills through the provision of individual programmes within a safe and secure learning environment.
- The school had its last standard inspection in March 2012 and a monitoring visit in December 2012. In December 2012, all the independent school regulations were found to have been met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise students' academic achievement, ensure staff:
 - visit other similar schools so that they can share best practice
 - are aware of, and understand, what the next steps are for individual students in their academic learning
 - make the subject matter taught in history and geography, and subsequent tasks, less abstract and more meaningful and relevant to the students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders, along with all other staff, have created a harmonious haven where students can thrive in all aspects of their work and life. Leaders, managers and staff at all levels are not complacent. They continue to strive to make 3 Dimensions the best school it can be.
- Students and adults have a high respect for each other's differences and uniqueness. Although very rare, school leaders tackle any possible discrimination robustly. Any intolerance of others and use of bad language is effectively dealt with by staff. Methods to reduce emotional outbursts are included in students' individual positive behaviour plans. School records show that the methods used are appropriate and successful.
- Students are encouraged to investigate and develop their own personal interests, hobbies and play activities. The school ensures that no limits are additionally placed on students' aspirations. For example, students can learn how to drive a tractor as part of a college course or attend an accredited scuba diving course.
- Students are prepared well for life in modern Britain through the very effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Each student's individual curriculum ensures that his or her spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The curriculum is very effectively adapted to help students learn how to make appropriate choices. Students gain basic functional living skills that they practise at home and in the community, for example how to cross the road safely, use a vending machine appropriately, and keep safe when using public lavatories.
- Students' achievements against basic functional living skills are very well recorded and the next steps for the students are shared thoroughly with school staff and the students' homes. This comprehensive information ensures that all adults can work cohesively with students and that they all have a deep understanding of what the student needs to do next. This is a key reason why students make excellent progress in these areas.
- Information about students' academic performance is recorded effectively and made readily available to staff. However, the targets for the next steps are not referenced as clearly, or as frequently, as the functional living skills. Consequently, not all adults who are involved with the students, including those who look after them after school, have a clear understanding about how to drive improvements in students' academic achievement so that students' progress is better than good.
- The school works with Careers South West to ensure all students receive good, impartial careers advice and guidance. This enables students to make informed choices about their next steps after leaving school.
- Leaders monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of students robustly. This includes when students are attending college or are on work experience.
- Teachers are regularly observed teaching and support staff have regular supervision to support them in their roles. The head of education highlights areas for development and enables staff to engage in further learning to enhance their personal education and development. Not enough staff have seen what other schools are doing with similar students and they have not been able to share best practice.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meets statutory requirements. The school's policies and procedures ensure that all staff are recruited in line with current statutory guidance. Staff know and follow clearly established practices that keep students and themselves safe. All staff are regularly trained in child protection and health and safety to an appropriate level for their roles and responsibilities
- **The governance of the school:**

This is a small school where the directors are generally on the school site. This allows them to see how well the school is running on a daily basis. Directors have an accurate view of the school's strengths. Where weaknesses have been identified, they have taken action to make the required improvements. Directors have weekly meetings with the head of education, in order to keep up to date with the quality of education being provided by staff and the subsequent progress that students are making. The directors hold the head of education to account for the achievement of students at the school. Support is provided to tackle underperformance of staff and appropriate actions are taken to ensure teaching is at least good. Systems are also in place to reward good teachers.

The directors ensure that finances are used appropriately to provide suitable numbers of staff to meet students' needs.

The classrooms have appropriate resources.

The directors ensure that the school meets the required standards for safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students are proud of their school and the work that they do. They are very positive about being in school and enjoy themselves because the activities they do are based on their interests as well as their needs. Attendance is good.
- Staff provide caring and helpful support that meets the students' social and emotional needs well. Students learn to trust the staff. Staff apply the behaviour systems well and incidents of misbehaviour typically reduce over time.
- At break and lunchtime, students and staff socialise and eat together. The school ensures that these times are exploited to maximise the opportunities for students to improve their social interaction skills, keep healthy and enjoy their recreation time.
- Students learn strategies to help manage their own anxiety levels. When emotional outbursts happen, the staff hold a debrief session with the students. The use of 'Whoops, it all went wrong sheets' help students to record strategies to help them cope in the future.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students are supervised and supported by school staff when attending college or undertaking visits in the community. Robust risk assessments are conducted before these visits and other school activities to ensure that students and others are kept safe. However, students are not 'wrapped in cotton wool' and are able to take full part in activities related to their learning. For example, they sensibly use knives and saws, light fires and make hot drinks when they visit forests or woodlands, learning personal, social and technical skills.
- Staff are effective in securing the safety of students. They have regular training in de-escalation techniques. Because they know what can trigger poor behaviour responses for each student, they can help the students reduce their levels of anxiety, keeping them calm and able to learn. Consequently, the frequency and level of incidents of inappropriate behaviour decline.
- Leaders, managers and staff effectively implement the policies for keeping students safe. Staff receive up-to-date training in child protection and first aid.
- External professionals regularly check fire safety and electrical equipment. Fire evacuation drills are carried out regularly and the school leaders monitor procedures routinely.
- The school meets the required independent school standards in relation to behaviour and safety.

The quality of teaching is good

- Staff have high expectations for students' achievement. All staff are clearly aware of the difference between the students learning and being occupied. Consequently, students make good progress in their lessons, as learning is the key focus rather than the completion of set tasks.
- In mathematics lessons, students learn how to use money so that they can purchase items for themselves that they want or need. They learn how to tell the time and understand graphs and tables, including timetables. This enables them to be able to work out when and where to catch the correct train or bus at the right time.
- Students learn how to be socially aware through developing a 'social thinking vocabulary.' In English lessons, they begin to recognise different figures of speech such as metaphors, allegories and idioms. They develop a bank of 'absurdities vocabulary' that helps them to understand social subtleties and nuances.
- In the books, folders and displays scrutinised by inspector, the academic achievement of students in writing and mathematics was at least good. This is similar for work in their personal, social and health education (PSHE), science and art. Work in humanities, although of good presentation, has not been targeted to be as relevant to the students as well as it has been for other subjects.
- Through being taught how to use visual cues and body language students gain a good understanding of what others might be thinking or feeling. They learn how their physical presence can affect other people if they stand too close or too far away when interacting with others. They learn how and why eye contact is important when speaking to other people.
- Assessment is secure, continuous and acted upon. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they have an excellent understanding of the students' needs and how best to help them. Lessons are carefully planned but flexible enough to allow for adaption when needed.
- Feedback to students about their work is communicated verbally and recorded carefully in students'

books. Everyone holds students' books in high regard. Work books show that students take great pride in what they have learned and can do. Their work is neat and tidy and demonstrates that good progress is made in their literacy and communication skills through all subjects.

- Activities are designed so that students' skills have a firm foundation that is then built upon with suitable extension activities. For example, they learn how to buy sweets and pay for them in a small shop. After learning how to cook, they go to a supermarket to select the ingredients in order to cook a meal. They need to choose the right aisles, use a self-checkout and pack their own bag. From this the students learn that shopping has a functional purpose and is not just a leisure activity or for buying preferred items
- Teaching assistants are well trained. They have clear roles and responsibilities. In addition, because they know the students so well, they are able to provide the right support at the right time.
- The school meets all the independent school standards well in relation to teaching.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students make good progress in their academic subjects. Duke of Edinburgh modules, ASDAN bronze to gold, and City and Guilds, along with literacy and numeracy courses, have continued to be successfully completed by students since the last inspection.
- Academic progress is at least good for the most able students, because of the staff's high expectations. Students have successfully undertaken and completed GCSE examinations in a range of subjects. Early entry for GCSE is not used.
- Each student has an individual curriculum and therapeutic programme that has been successfully designed to match his or her unique needs and interests. Consequently, students make excellent progress in their functional living skills. Examples include following hygiene routines, developing self-management skills, and developing core communication skills. They learn to how to safely prepare food and cook it, and do basic cleaning tasks around the home. In addition, they learn how to do their own laundry and how to live harmoniously with others. This increases the potential for them to be able to live independently, to be successful in school, and to take advantage of various social and recreational activities throughout their life.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. All students are given the opportunity to experience a good range of activities, such as visits to the theatre that are then used as 'wow' moments in English to inspire students with their writing.
- Outdoor education is a strength of the school. Students get accreditation at Levels 1 to 3 in a wide range of water sports. They are also supported to undertake other accredited courses, such as in scuba diving.
- Prior to the inspection, students had been learning about the forthcoming general election. They were keen to share with the inspector and other adults their views about the different parties and whom they would vote for and why. The school ensures that the information given to students is not biased and that it supports and complements fundamental British values. The school has a range of policies in place to ensure that the promotion of extremism is prohibited.
- In relation to students' academic and personal development, the school meets the independent school standards well.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The leadership and management of the sixth form provision are good. Senior staff have ensured that students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Students behave well. They enjoy coming to school and have excellent relationships with school staff. Students report that they feel safe and very well cared for. Inspection evidence concurs with these views.
- As a result of good teaching, students make good progress. Students' achievement is good and they undertake appropriate functional skills qualifications in mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT). They continue to have an individual curriculum that is interesting and appropriate to their needs.
- Students are carefully supported to attend local colleges, following courses that interest them and that can lead to successful employment or that help in their personal development. From these experiences, they generally acquire a good attitude towards further education and develop lifelong learning patterns.
- Students continue to make excellent progress in their functional living skills. Each student's curriculum provides a range of work-related activities. This increases students' knowledge of different jobs they could do. It helps them to develop key work skills and promotes a positive work ethic.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	134909
Inspection number	464256
DfE registration number	933/6207

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent
School status	Special school for pupils with behavioural difficulties, learning difficulties and an autistic spectrum condition
Age range of pupils	11–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Proprietor	Nita Ellul
Headteacher	Caroline Mousseau
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 March 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£62,000
Telephone number	01460 68055
Email address	team@3dimensionscare.co.uk

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