

Sherborne Learning Centre

Simons Road, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 4DN

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and the management committee have failed to ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- The local authority and the management committee have acted too slowly and done too little to tackle the significant weaknesses that have developed since the previous inspection. As a result, the school is not providing an acceptable standard of education for pupils.
- The management committee has a weak understanding of the progress pupils make across the school. It does not consistently challenge leaders about the progress pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is poor. Personal learning plans for pupils do not identify precise next steps or strategies to achieve success.
- Improvement planning is at a very early stage. The management committee has not ensured that a robust plan is in place to identify priorities and drive improvements across the school.
- Middle leaders are new and their skills in leading their areas of responsibility are at a very early stage of development.
- Teachers do not use assessment information to plan learning activities that match pupils' needs. Expectations are far too low and there is insufficient challenge for pupils.
- The buildings in which key stage 3 pupils are taught are not fit for purpose. Urgent action is needed to improve the provision for these pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Under the direction of new leaders, teaching, learning and assessment are starting to develop and improve, particularly in mathematics. These changes are very recent.
- All Year 11 pupils moved on to further education or employment in 2017 due to the support and advice provided by the school.
- Strong relationships across the school help pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils appreciate the way that behaviour is managed.
- Some aspects of the curriculum, such as outdoor learning and design and technology, provide useful learning experiences for pupils.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- As a matter of urgency, improve the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements by ensuring that:
 - there are clear roles and responsibilities for safeguarding
 - safeguarding policies are up to date and all staff are knowledgeable about how to keep pupils safe
 - staff, including those who lead safeguarding in the school, have appropriate training and guidance so that they are able to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively
 - there is a review of the site used for key stage 3 pupils and appropriate risk assessments are put in place in order to improve the health and safety of this provision.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by making sure that:
 - leaders at all levels receive the support and guidance they need in order to tackle the significant weaknesses in the school
 - improvement plans are focused on the key priorities, have clear milestones and are rigorously reviewed and updated
 - the management committee closely checks the achievement of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - leaders use assessment information to identify weaknesses in achievement and rapidly make any changes needed in order for pupils' achievement to improve
 - the new performance management system is embedded and is used to drive improvement in teaching, accelerate pupils' progress and hold teachers and leaders rigorously to account.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to accelerate the progress pupils make by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information to plan learning activities that closely match pupils' learning needs
 - pupils' learning plans identify their precise next steps and the strategies needed to achieve success.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in

order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Over time, senior leaders and the management committee have not ensured that safeguarding is effective or that pupils receive an acceptable standard of education. The local authority commissioned a full review in March 2017. A further review of safeguarding was completed in July 2017 at the request of the newly appointed interim headteacher.
- Both reviews highlighted significant weaknesses in the quality of education provided and in safeguarding arrangements. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils give serious cause for concern. Weaknesses in teaching, learning and particularly in assessment mean that pupils do not make the progress they should.
- Action plans to address the concerns raised are still at an early stage of development. The management committee has not ensured that there is a robust school improvement plan in place that demonstrates how and when weaknesses are to be tackled.
- The local authority and the management committee have not acted quickly enough. They have not ensured that there is sufficient capacity to make the improvements needed through well-coordinated support for leaders. Concerns raised by leaders about the key stage 3 site have not been acted on. As a result, despite the determination displayed by the new leaders, the impact of leaders' actions to make improvements has been limited.
- Although work has begun to support the new middle leaders, these leaders' skills in leading particular areas of improvement across the school are at a very early stage of development. Therefore, there has been little impact on the quality of education for pupils.
- The school does not have a SEN coordinator. Pupils have individual learning plans but they are not precise. They do not help teachers or other agencies to provide specific support for pupils in order to meet their needs. As a result, some pupils' needs are unmet and their outcomes are poor.
- Pupil premium funding is used to extend and enrich the curriculum and to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils. However, the impact of this and other funding is not evaluated closely by leaders or the management committee.
- Leaders are aware that the school's systems lack clarity, rigour and consistency. New performance management plans focus on improving the quality of teaching. Professional development to support a shared understanding of what good-quality teaching, learning and assessment look like has begun. A new system to track the progress pupils make is in place. Senior leaders' checks on areas of the school's work are now effective. However, this improvement is very recent and, at this stage, there is little impact.
- The curriculum offered to pupils, particularly for key stage 3 pupils, supports them to manage their feelings and to develop more positive attitudes towards learning. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is effective, as it helps pupils

to understand how to live healthily and safely.

- Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is not effective.
- There is a lack of rigour in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are secure.
- The management committee includes suitably skilled and experienced individuals who meet regularly to discuss the areas of the school's work. However, the committee has not acted quickly or decisively to ensure that the serious concerns raised by leaders and through recent reviews have been acted on.
- The management committee is not robust in checking the progress that pupils or groups of pupils make. This includes pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Senior leaders and the management committee have not acted upon recommendations from safeguarding audits and other safeguarding advice.
- Safeguarding policies do not contain the latest guidance and staff do not have up-to-date knowledge in respect of safeguarding.
- Staff are not consistently clear about who is responsible for what with regard to safeguarding. Some staff have not received up-to-date safeguarding training, particularly to ensure that new staff are safely recruited.
- The premises used for the education of pupils in key stage 3 are unsuitable. In particular, leaders have not carried out appropriate risk assessments to ensure that pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teachers and other adults in the school work hard to encourage pupils to focus on their learning tasks. However, expectations of what pupils are able to achieve have been too low for too long. New leaders have recently started a drive to raise expectations across all aspects of teaching and learning but this has not had the time to have any significant impact yet.
- The quality of teaching and learning varies too much across key subjects. Too often, teaching does not take account of the knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils already have. The system to assess and track the progress that pupils make is new and is not used consistently to help teachers to identify pupils' next steps in learning.
- Pupils are not able to communicate, read and write as well as they should and therefore are unable to access different areas of the curriculum successfully. The specific needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not identified well enough. Therefore, teachers are not able to adapt learning effectively to meet these pupils'

needs.

- In mathematics, teaching is skilfully planned using assessments of what pupils understand and can do. Work is therefore suitably challenging. Pupils respond well to this and books show an increased pride in their work. However, this improvement is very recent and has not yet been developed across other subjects such as English and science.
- Teaching in some subjects, such as art, outdoor learning and design and technology, engages pupils. This helps pupils to develop positive attitudes towards their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The personal development and welfare of pupils requires improvement.
- The school's PSHE curriculum threads throughout teaching and learning. It is also taught specifically during lessons. This provides pupils with information on keeping healthy and staying safe. There is not a clear system in place that helps leaders to assess the impact of the school's work to promote PSHE.
- Pupils say that their work during PSHE helps to raise awareness of a range of issues, such as how to avoid substance abuse. Pupils also say that the discussions in school help them to make improved choices.
- As a result of the drive by leaders to raise expectations, including in the alternative provision, pupils are showing more pride in their work than they have previously. Teachers and other staff create mainly positive relationships with pupils. This higher expectation and positive approach help pupils to improve attitudes towards their learning.
- Pupils report that they are confident that any incidents of bullying are managed well by staff and that they feel safe. Adults support this as they provide clear boundaries of what is and what is not acceptable.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Attendance is low but leaders' work to improve attendance shows signs of helping more pupils to attend school reliably.
- Despite the complex difficulties that many pupils at the centre have experienced in previous settings, pupils' conduct around school is generally calm and respectful. The system for recognising and rewarding pupils' positive behaviour, attendance and attitudes is consistent across the school's sites.
- Teaching and learning in key stage 3 have a particular emphasis on developing self-awareness and self-discipline. Leaders are able to provide examples of how this work supports pupils to improve their attitudes as they move through the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Despite recent actions from leaders to support higher expectations, the progress pupils make from their starting points varies too widely. This is the case in English, mathematics and a range of subjects and courses. Too many pupils, for too long, have underachieved.
- Assessment, including progress information, is limited. The systems for assessing pupils' starting points, both for pupils who have been at the centre for some time and for pupils who arrive during the year, are new and not yet well established.
- Until very recently, teachers have had little support to ensure that they are able to assess pupils' learning strengths and to identify their next steps. Work to secure accurate assessment across the school has started, but there has not been time to see the impact of this.
- In 2017, most Year 11 pupils achieved qualifications, including a range of GCSE qualifications. No assessment information was available to assess whether this represents good progress for pupils from their individual starting points. Pupils' workbooks, however, show that the progress pupils make from their starting points is inadequate.
- In 2017, nearly all Year 11 pupils moved successfully on to further education courses and a small number moved on to employment. Pupils are supported well through a course called 'Life after Sherborne Learning Centre', which develops pupils' employability skills.

School details

Unique reference number	130315
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10025150

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Nicki Edwards
Headteacher	Victoria Rashleigh
Telephone number	01935 814 582
Website	www.sherborne-lc.org.uk
Email address	office@sherborne-lc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 March 2014

Information about this school

- Sherborne Learning Centre is a pupil referral unit. Pupils come from a wide geographical area and most come to the centre by taxi.
- The majority of pupils attend the centre because they either have been excluded or are at risk of being permanently excluded from their mainstream school.
- A significant proportion of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above the national average.
- No current pupils are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding because most pupils join the centre later in their secondary career.
- Pupils in key stage 3 attend an off-site provision on premises which are being used temporarily. This is due to the previous site being closed due to health and safety concerns being raised. The site, Sherborne Area Youth and Community Centre, is a community centre accessed by members of the public. There is also an outside sports

area at this site that all pupils access during physical education lessons. The school also uses alternative provision on a working farm called Rylands Farm, where pupils access land-based studies and design and technology projects. Some pupils are supported on-site by youth workers for specific areas that need extra support.

- The interim headteacher took up post in May 2017. An interim deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2017. Leaders receive some support from a headteacher from a nearby pupil referral unit and a school education partner provided by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning alongside senior leaders. They spoke to pupils and looked at the work in their books. Inspectors also visited the Rylands Farm and Tinneys Lane sites to observe learning there.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, teachers and several members of the management committee. Meetings were also held with representatives from the local authority. The lead inspector spoke to the school education partner on the telephone.
- Information about parents' views was not available from Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire because too few parents had completed the questionnaire. The inspector met with two carers.
- Inspectors examined documents relating to governance, school improvement planning, pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour, the curriculum and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John White

Ofsted Inspector

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