

Inspection of Wessex Lodge School

Nunney Road, Frome, Somerset BA11 4LA

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and cared for at Wessex Lodge School. Staff give pupils' well-being the highest priority. Leaders place a strong emphasis on staff building solid relationships with pupils. They train staff to understand why pupils' behaviour can be challenging and how best to respond.

Many pupils have missed a lot of learning before they join the school. Leaders gather detailed information on new pupils. Teachers use this information to write personal plans for each pupil. This helps pupils to successfully re-engage with learning and meet teachers' high expectations.

Pupils typically behave well and show respect for each other and staff. When this is not the case, staff work skilfully with pupils to help them settle back into learning. Should bullying occur, pupils know that staff will deal with incidents quickly and effectively.

The school provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities on two contrasting sites. These range from classroom lessons to farm-related studies. For example, pupils have the opportunity to care for livestock on the working farm. Pupils also take part in a wide range of sporting and outdoor activities. These help to build their self-esteem, resilience and knowledge of healthy lifestyles.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school. A high-quality curriculum is supported by effective care and nurture for all pupils. The proprietor and all staff share this vision.

Leaders have established a curriculum that sets out what they want pupils to know in each subject. Plans show how pupils' knowledge and skills build in a structured way. The range of subjects available meets the requirements of the independent school standards. Leaders base subject planning on the national curriculum. Warm, caring relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils feel valued and ready to learn.

Most pupils have experienced gaps in their education. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers carefully consider each pupil's academic and emotional needs in their planning. As a result, teachers match learning well to individual needs and abilities. Working with animals on the farm, access to woodland, and outdoor education provide pupils with rich learning experiences.

Teachers use assessment well across the curriculum. They check that pupils have learned the curriculum as intended. Leaders use assessment information to allocate extra support to pupils identified as needing it.

Across the curriculum, a subject leader is responsible for developing each subject. However, some leaders are new in their roles with limited leadership experience. As a result, they do not yet have all the understanding needed to improve their areas of responsibility. This includes, for example, using information about pupils' learning to improve their subject further.

Helping pupils to become confident readers is a school priority. Leaders have trained all staff to support pupils who find reading difficult. Leaders have invested in reading schemes to help pupils develop their skills. Each day, time is set aside for reading. Both school sites have well-stocked libraries for pupils to use. Consequently, pupils who find reading difficult get the help they need to catch up and become confident readers.

Pupils' personal development lies at the heart of the school's provision. Specialist staff work with each pupil to help them understand their own emotions and behaviour. This helps pupils to see why they sometimes feel angry or upset. Staff help pupils develop ways to manage their behaviour. The team of specialists also provides all staff with training. This enables staff to understand each pupil's social, emotional and learning needs. As a result, pupils feel understood and supported. They behave well most of the time.

Leaders use the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum to help pupils become independent adults. Leaders plan individual interventions to support individual pupils' personal development. Lessons include learning about sex and relationships. The headteacher consulted parents and carers about this aspect of the curriculum.

Pupils benefit from detailed careers advice. Leaders provide support to help pupils with their career aspirations. Older pupils are offered work experience to explore possible career options. As a result, pupils move on to a college or training setting of their choice.

Parents have a positive view of the school. Parents appreciate leaders' efforts to share information about their children's well-being and academic achievement.

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards. This includes the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. In addition, the proprietor has established a governing board to provide challenge to the leaders. This board comprises the regional director of the proprietor body and the headteachers of the five similar schools.

Staff feel well supported by leaders and are proud to work in the school. Leaders consider staff welfare and well-being when planning improvements to the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding policies and procedures pay due regard to government guidance and are published on the school's website.

Leaders provide staff with regular safeguarding training. Staff have secure knowledge of possible risks of harm that pupils may face. They are vigilant and place a high priority on safeguarding pupils.

Staff share concerns with leaders through well-established routines. Leaders follow up on any concerns raised. They work well with other agencies to ensure that pupils get the support they need. Leaders make thorough checks on adults who work in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Subject leaders are still developing in their roles. This means that there are gaps in some aspects of their leadership, for example in identifying precisely what actions are needed to further improve the curriculum to support pupils' learning. Senior leaders should ensure that all subject leaders have the knowledge and skills they need to continue to develop their subject areas to ensure that the curriculum develops what pupils know and can do.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	133522
DfE registration number	933/6210
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10212936
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Kate Stradling
Annual fees (day pupils)	£70,200
Telephone number	01373 453414
Website	www.wessexlodgeschool.co.uk
Email address	kates@enhancedlearningservices.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 to 15 March 2018

Information about this school

- Wessex Lodge School is an independent special school. It operates from two sites: Wessex Lodge in Frome and Triskele Farm in Maiden Bradley.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection, ownership of the school has changed to Acorn Care and Education Ltd.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and two deputy headteachers of the school. Inspectors also met with the regional director of Acorn Care and Education Ltd.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors explored safeguarding arrangements by reviewing records, checking the safety of the school sites, talking to staff about how they keep pupils safe, and checking the school's single central record. They met with the school's designated lead for safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors also took into account the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and had telephone conversations with some parents.

Inspection team

Mark Burgess, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

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