

Inspection of The Lion Works School

543 Wallisdown Road, Poole, Dorset BH12 5AD

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

The culture of safeguarding is very weak. The proprietor, who is also the headteacher and designated safeguarding lead (DSL), does not understand the relevant guidance well enough to keep pupils safe. Pupils, many of whom are managing complex challenges in their personal lives, do not get the help they need from the right professionals at the right time.

The school provides specialist education for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Many pupils have a positive experience. However, some pupils do not settle in well. Leaders do not do enough to adapt the provision to meet the needs of these pupils. Too many placements break down. When this happens, leaders terminate pupils' placements.

There is a calm, industrious atmosphere around the school. Most pupils understand the routines and participate willingly. They are community minded. For example, pupils take responsibility for the lunch service, providing hot meals for the rest of the school. Pupils' interactions are respectful. Bullying is rare. Pupils are sensitive to each other's differences.

Expectations of what pupils can achieve academically are not high enough. For some pupils, the curriculum provided makes it unlikely that they will ever catch up quickly.

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

The curriculum is not ambitious enough. Many pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge resulting from periods out of education. The curriculum that leaders provide does not help pupils to catch up on any missed learning quickly enough.

Leaders are rethinking their use of assessment. As a result, they have recognised that many pupils are capable of more than the curriculum asks of them. Leaders have rightly identified that they need to develop subject leaders who can design an ambitious curriculum for each subject. In some subjects, for example science and art, the curriculum builds well on pupils' different starting points. Leaders have not thought enough about what makes an ambitious curriculum in English and mathematics.

Leaders recognise that pupils do not read accurately or widely enough. Their work to address this is in its infancy. Leaders have introduced a routine of daily reading. Pupils who have already developed the fluency needed to understand what they are reading, read avidly. Other pupils do not gain much from this dedicated time. Leaders have recognised that some pupils have gaps in their phonics knowledge. They are in the process of developing expertise among staff so that pupils benefit from a well-taught phonics programme.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) has a high priority within the curriculum. Pupils learn about topics such as cyberbullying. The PSHE curriculum

includes teaching relationships and sex education. Leaders have introduced a new curriculum without publishing a written statement or consulting with parents.

Leaders emphasise to pupils the importance of community and resilience. They provide opportunities for pupils to contribute to the running of the school. For example, pupils carry out housekeeping duties. Pupils develop resilience through outdoor education activities off site. They also work towards the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards. Pupils also benefit from impartial careers advice. Teachers help pupils to think more about the character traits and knowledge required for different careers.

Most pupils engage well with school. Lessons are rarely disrupted. However, a significant minority of pupils cannot meet leaders' expectations of behaviour or attendance. This impedes their ability to follow the curriculum that leaders provide. These pupils often have complex difficulties with social, emotional and mental health needs which relate to their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders do not do enough to adapt the provision to meet the needs of these pupils.

In some cases, pupils fall into patterns of poor attendance until their placement breaks down entirely. The proprietor has not cooperated with requests from the local authority, for example, to contribute to an early review of a pupil's education, health and care plan (EHC plan). The proprietor has taken pupils off the school roll before the responsible local authority has been able to arrange another school for the pupil to go to. By acting in these ways, the proprietor frustrates pupils' right of access to the educational and wider development opportunities associated with full-time schooling.

The proprietor performs the role of headteacher and DSL. The oversight of the school's performance of statutory responsibilities is poor. Leaders do not understand their responsibilities towards pupils with SEND and children looked after, or perform these effectively. The current arrangements for governance have not served the school well. As a result, the independent school standards are not met in full. This includes unmet standards relating to the premises and the provision of information.

Staff have confidence in the school's leaders. They report that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. The school employs early career teachers and they feel well supported. There are many positive relationships between staff and pupils. Staff told inspectors that they feel very fortunate to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school's published safeguarding policy does not reflect the most recent guidance. The register of checks made on the suitability of staff is incomplete. Some staff have been allowed to work with pupils without the required recruitment checks. Leaders do not have clear processes in place to enable allegations against staff to be dealt with consistently or to identify when advice should be sought.

Staff have a good understanding of different risks and are vigilant. However, their concerns are not taken seriously enough. Leaders are reluctant to inform and involve safeguarding partners. They downplay the likelihood of pupils developing extreme views or becoming victims of child criminal exploitation.

Leaders place too much stock in their own judgement and do not consult with appropriately qualified people. Consequently, pupils do not receive the professional help they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders do not understand or fulfil the responsibility that they have to share information about vulnerable pupils with safeguarding partners. This means there is a risk that unsuitable adults could be appointed to positions working with vulnerable pupils. The proprietor must ensure that the school follows relevant statutory guidance set out in 'Keeping children safe in education' and meets all the requirements of the independent school standards related to the suitability of staff.
- Leaders underestimate the risks arising in pupils' lives. They fail to understand the potential significance of details in the safeguarding information they gather. Leaders do not share information proactively with safeguarding partners, such as the local authority. Consequently, pupils are not protected from developing risks. Leaders must ensure that immediate referral is made to the appropriate agency where there is evidence that a pupil is suffering, or might suffer, significant harm.
- Leaders do not take effective action to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent. As a result, some of the most vulnerable pupils do not benefit from the curriculum and wider development opportunities offered by the school. Pupils who do not attend well sometimes go on to experience a breakdown of their placement. Leaders should seek to understand the individual reasons for pupils' poor attendance and respond to these.
- Leaders do not understand their statutory responsibilities towards pupils with SEND well enough. They do not complete their annual reviews of education, health and care plans in a timely manner. Some pupils experience an abrupt termination of their placement at the school, without a new school place to go on to. The proprietor must ensure that the school meets all statutory duties towards pupils with SEND and that leaders act in the best interests of pupils.
- The curriculum is not ambitious enough for some pupils. Leaders do not use assessment incisively to identify what pupils already know. Many pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge due to difficult educational experiences before they joined the school. The curriculum is not designed to help pupils to catch up quickly enough. Leaders should ensure that all pupils benefit from an ambitious curriculum which helps them to realise their aspirations.

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	148031
DfE registration number	839/6013
Local authority	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
Inspection number	10212962
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Classroom Education Services
Headteacher	Bruno Davis
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,000 to £36,000
Telephone number	01202 113707
Website	www.thelionworksschool.org
Email address	hello@thelionworksschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 21 January 2021. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- This is a specialist provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. All pupils on roll have EHC plans. Almost all placements are funded by one of three local authorities: Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Dorset, and Hampshire.
- The school is included on the list of approved independent special schools, in accordance with Section 41 of the Children's and Families Act 2014.
- Although the school is permitted to accept pupils of age 11 to 18, there are currently no pupils on roll in the sixth form.
- The school uses no alternative providers.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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

- Inspectors met with the proprietor (who is also the headteacher), the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, PSHE, science and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons and spoke to leaders and pupils about some other subjects.
- To inspect the quality of safeguarding, inspectors met with the proprietor (who is also the designated safeguarding lead), scrutinised records of the checks made to establish the suitability of adults working within the school, looked at a range of documentary evidence, including the safeguarding policy and examples of pupil case files, and held discussions with a range of staff and pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with, and considered other communications from, the local authority.

- Inspectors checked the safety and suitability of the premises. They scrutinised risk assessments and associated policies.
- Inspectors considered school documents such as the school improvement plan, documents related to curriculum development, staff's training and samples of assessments and reports written for parents.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Aykin

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
 - 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 18(2)(a) no such person is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that person is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to that Act;
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person-
 - 18(2)(c)(iii) the person's right to work in the United Kingdom.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.
- 19(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-

- 19(2)(a) a person offered for supply by an employment business to the school only begins to work at the school if the proprietor has received-
- 19(2)(a)(i)(aa) that the checks referred to in paragraph 21(3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vii) and (b) have been made to the extent relevant to that person;
- 19(2)(b) a person offered for supply by an employment business only begins work at the school if the proprietor considers that the person is suitable for the work for which the person is supplied;
- 19(2)(c) before a person offered for supply by an employment business begins work at the school the person's identity is checked by the proprietor of the school (irrespective of any such check carried out by the employment business before the person was offered for supply).
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether-
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.
- 21(5) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to supply staff-
 - 21(5)(a) whether written notification has been received from the employment business that-
 - 21(5)(a)(i) checks corresponding to those referred to in sub-paragraph (3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vi) and (vii) have been made to the extent relevant to any such person; and

- 21(5)(a)(ii) an enhanced criminal record check has been made and that it or another employment business has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate in response to such a check.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including-
 - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 32(1)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector[14], the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate[15];
 - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
 - 32(1)(i) where a pupil with an EHC plan wholly or partly funded by a local authority or other body through public funds is registered at the school, such information as may reasonably be required for the purpose of the annual review of the EHC plan is provided to the responsible local authority.
- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 32(2)(b)(i) where the proprietor is an individual, the proprietor's full name, address for correspondence during both term-time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which the proprietor may be contacted.
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 32(3)(a) particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions;
 - 32(3)(b) particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with EHC plans and pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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