

Inspection of Gradually Developing Futures

Valley View Farm, Castle Farm Road, Lytchett Matravers, Dorset BH16 6DA

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 November 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	Not previously inspected
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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 are proud of their achievements since joining Gradually Developing Futures. They are happy and safe. Pupils enjoy learning and attend school regularly. This contrasts with their previous experience of education. Leaders' vision to 'Engage, Motivate, Inspire' underpins the school's curriculum. Pupils' personal development is nurtured well.

Staff skilfully support pupils to recognise their social and emotional responses. For example, pupils know how to share, take turns and care for the school's farm animals well. Regular practice of different social interactions and situations helps pupils develop resilience and perseverance successfully. Over time, pupils learn to accept and welcome praise.

All pupils have a trusted adult they can speak with if they are feeling anxious or worried. Staff and pupils show respect for each other. They live the school values, written by the pupils. Pupils know that staff care about them and want them to do well.

A sense of community and mutual trust is seen throughout the school. Parents appreciate the support and opportunities their children and family receive. Parents say that staff go 'above and beyond' to give their children the 'time and support to be able to learn'.

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

Leaders and staff are passionate and committed to creating a curriculum that meets the needs of each pupil. They have designed a clear, coherent and carefully sequenced curriculum that breaks learning down into small, achievable steps. In mathematics, for example, pupils practise calculations before they apply their knowledge to a range of problem-solving and reasoning questions successfully, such as calculating how much feed the animals need.

Before joining the school, pupils missed significant parts of their education. To ease their transition back into education, pupils learn through the 'social and communication pathway' before they begin the 'academic pathway'. Teachers prepare pupils well, so they are ready to learn. They use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan targets and the core curriculum of English, mathematics, science and social communication skills to design each pupil's learning effectively. Leaders have rightly focused on closing gaps in pupils' knowledge in these subjects to help them catch up. Regular revision of prior knowledge and assessment ensures that teachers identify the gaps accurately.

Pupils also have gaps in their knowledge, skills and vocabulary across the wider curriculum. However, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not closing as quickly in some of these subjects. This is because subject leadership and teacher knowledge are not as well developed in the wider curriculum.

Leaders expect all pupils to learn to read well. Pupils who need additional support to secure their phonics knowledge are identified swiftly. Teachers' understanding of how to develop pupils' phonics knowledge is secure. They use this to check pupils' pronunciation of phonemes successfully. Reading books match pupils' phonics knowledge appropriately. Where pupils have secure phonics knowledge, they read with accuracy and fluency.

Teachers support pupils to develop their reading comprehension by sharing and discussing high-quality texts. This also helps pupils develop their social and emotional skills and knowledge. For example, pupils show empathy with other people when talking about an adapted version of Anne Frank's 'The Diary of a Young Girl'. Staff promote reading successfully.

Clear procedures are in place to identify, assess and meet pupils' additional needs. This includes pupils' social, emotional, mental health and speech and language needs. Pupils work with staff to agree on and review individual education plan targets effectively. Targets are evidenced regularly to inform EHC plan reviews and plan appropriate next steps. Leaders of SEND work with parents and external agencies well.

Pupils learn to recognise their emotions within a safe environment through a carefully sequenced personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, clear staff expectations and praise. This leads to pupils being able to self-regulate successfully. Pupils know right from wrong. They know how to be physically and mentally healthy. Pupils are developing their knowledge of life in modern Britain. They are learning to become confident individuals who can contribute to society effectively.

Leaders, including governors, know the strengths and areas for school improvement. They welcome advice and support from appropriate external agencies to develop their effectiveness as strategic leaders. Leaders and staff share a clear vision for school improvement and growth.

Staff feel valued and appreciated. They know leaders care for their well-being. Leaders have plans to reduce teacher workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Appropriate safeguarding checks are completed before staff and volunteers begin working at the school. Governors check recruitment records regularly to assure themselves that they are up to date and accurate.

Leaders are tenacious in their pursuit to keep pupils safe. Staff attend training and know how to report and record concerns correctly. Leaders are quick to follow up on concerns for pupils' safety and welfare.

Staff work with external agencies, such as the police, to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Subject leadership and teachers' subject knowledge of some wider curriculum subjects is not secure. This means the intended curriculum is not implemented effectively. Senior leaders need to support teachers to develop their subject knowledge and develop the effectiveness of subject leadership in some wider curriculum subjects.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	148046
DfE registration number	838/6013
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10230032
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	6 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Proprietor	GDF Consultancy.com Limited
Chair	Trystan Williams
Principal	James Gregory, CEO
Annual fees	£85,000
Telephone number	07984 274 303
Website	www.graduatelydevelopingfutures.co.uk
Email address	jag@gdfconsultancy.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- GDF Consultancy.com Limited is the proprietor body.
- The school opened in September 2021. It provides places for pupils with social and communication needs in receipt of an EHC plan.
- Pupils from Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole counties attend the school.
- The school do 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 received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the principal, director of leadership and learning, the senior teacher, staff, pupils and governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole local authority.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a known adult.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and PSHE. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum 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.
- The inspectors also observed pupils during breaktimes, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and leaders about opportunities for pupils' personal development.
- The inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including records of safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. They considered how well the designated safeguarding lead acts on concerns about pupils' safety and welfare. The inspectors spoke to pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding practices.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including policies and record-keeping for behaviour management, exclusions and attendance.

- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and discussions with parents. She also took into consideration the responses to the survey for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Marie Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Martin Greenwood

Ofsted Inspector

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