

Inspection of an outstanding school: Yewstock School

Honeymead Lane, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 1EW

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

Yewstock School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

'Couldn't be happier with the care and teaching provided at Yewstock' and 'a wonderful school' are views shared by many parents. Pupils love coming to this school. It is a place where pupils flourish and excel.

Behaviour is outstanding. Relationships between adults and pupils are exceptional. Staff create an atmosphere which is calm and purposeful. They understand each pupils' unique needs, enabling them to reduce anxiety and stress. For example, leaders are mindful of the long journey to school some pupils face. They ensure that pupils have access to breakfast, a calm space and 'wake and shake' on arrival to school. These activities set pupils up well for their learning. As a result, pupils are happy, feel safe and achieve extremely well.

Pupils, irrespective of their disability or particular need, relish the rich and varied wider opportunities on offer. Staff see beyond the special needs of pupils and 'knock down' any barriers. For example, sailing, paddle boarding and cheerleading are just a few activities available to pupils. These increase their confidence and build self-esteem. Along with other experiences, pupils and students develop high levels of independence. This enables them to contribute positively to their community and prepare them for adulthood.

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

Pupils are at the forefront of all conversations leaders have about the quality of education and care they provide. They are ambitious that all pupils develop the life skills they need.

Leaders provide an outstanding curriculum that precisely meets each pupil's needs. As a result, pupils, including students in the sixth form, gain the knowledge and skills they need to lead successful lives.

Developing pupils' independence and preparing them for adult life starts from the moment they start at Yewstock. They receive outstanding careers guidance and are encouraged to

have high aspirations for their futures. Leaders provide high-quality work placements to enable students to experience the world of work. As a result, teachers plan each student's next steps for education or employment carefully.

Teachers know pupils exceptionally well. They select learning opportunities that help pupils to gain and use new knowledge well. Teachers ensure that pupils frequently revisit their learning to embed knowledge into their long-term memory. For example, older pupils use their mathematical knowledge beyond the classroom when budgeting for shopping. Teachers use assessment effectively in order to check what pupils remember and enable them to plan the next steps in learning.

Leaders are determined that every pupil will become, at the very least, a functional reader. Secure systems are in place to accurately identify pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read. Staff support pupils expertly to strengthen their knowledge of phonics. Pupils have daily opportunities to improve their reading fluency and comprehension. Leaders select texts with care to ensure they are age and stage appropriate. Most pupils develop a love of reading and can talk with enthusiasm about the types of books and authors they enjoy. Pupils who find reading a challenge fully understand the need to persevere and practise reading. They know it is an important life skill.

Pupils' wider personal development is pivotal to the school's work. Leaders plan and sequence the curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) with significant care. Pupils build knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy and lead safe, active lives. They show their understanding of different cultures, faiths, types of families and relationships. Through their personal development, staff teach pupils to respect each other. This was exemplified when inspectors met with a selection of pupils from the 'Rainbow Alliance.' Pupils are very clear that everyone has a right to be treated equally and with respect and are confident this is the case at Yewstock.

Pupils are positive and enthusiastic learners who embrace every opportunity the school provides. They show commitment to their education through regular attendance and positive attitudes in lessons. Pupils work well together, for example taking their blood pressure and measuring their height to support their science work. This develops pupils' socialisation skills and the ability to work together.

Governors know the school very well. They provide leaders with support and challenge. There is a continuous cycle of school development to ensure that pupils and students get the very best quality of education and care. Leaders are outward looking and work closely with external experts to ensure that the school continues to grow and flourish. Morale among staff is high. They welcome the support leaders provide for their well-being and the consideration given to providing an appropriate work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders create a strong safeguarding culture. They ensure that keeping pupils safe is

everyone's responsibility. Staff know what to do if they think a pupil is at risk. Leaders make timely and well-informed decisions. They work closely with other agencies and are not afraid to challenge decisions made to ensure pupils are safe. Governors regularly check the effectiveness of the school's work, including safer recruitment procedures.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know that adults will listen to them if they have any concerns and will help.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in June 2013.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	113965
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10211131
Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Lagden
Headteacher	Clive Padgett
Website	www.yewstock.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe and moderate learning difficulties or complex learning difficulties.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school is a member of the Teaching Alliance of Dorset Special Schools.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders, school staff and seven members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with an education challenge lead from Dorset local authority and a school improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors sampled pupils' work across a range of subjects, including science and PSHE.
- The lead inspector listened to a selection of pupils in Years 2 to 9 read to an adult.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including the safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. They considered how well the designated safeguarding leader acts on concerns about pupils' welfare and safety. Inspectors talked to pupils, staff and governors about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- The lead inspector considered key documentation, including the school development plan.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. An inspector met with leaders to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies and responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gill Hickling

Ofsted Inspector

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