

Inspection of LeAF Studio

Holloway Avenue, Bournemouth, Dorset BH11 9JW

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| Inspection dates: | 24 and 25 September 2024 |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Outstanding |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Sixth-form provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Good |

The principal of this school is Nadine Lapskas. This school is part of Authentic Education Group Limited, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Fay MacRitchie, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alison Beane.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at LeAF Studio School. Many parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the transformation of their child since joining the school. Pupils feel part of a special community. They say you can be yourself and are free from judgement. Pupils share a collective ambition to work hard and be successful.

The school and trust have established a positive and supportive culture. The vast majority of pupils are highly motivated and work hard. Low-level disruption is rare. Pupils are supported to be resilient to any setbacks they may face. Staff believe this is essential in preparing pupils for a professional future in sports or performing arts. Pupils are encouraged to take on additional roles or responsibilities, such as leading sports days for local primary schools.

Pupils benefit from an exceptional range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. For many, this leads to them performing in sports or performing arts at a national or international level. For example, many pupils performed in the 'Move It' show in London this year. Students in the sixth form can attend an off-site provider that specialises in an area of the curriculum. One of these is Rockley Park, where students can achieve many additional qualifications linked to water sports.

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

Pupils follow an ambitious specialist curriculum in sports or performing arts. This is taught alongside a core curriculum that includes mathematics, English and science. Although the key stages 4 and 5 academic published outcomes are lower than is typical nationally, pupils join the school in Year 9 so do not experience their full curriculum journey here. In the vocational qualifications, outcomes are much stronger. Pupils' destinations, including for those that are disadvantaged, show they are being well prepared for their next steps.

The school's ambition is for pupils to 'perform to their potential'. They encourage pupils to consider more than one career route. This ensures that pupils broaden their prospects for further education or employment. Across the curriculum, staff carefully plan the knowledge they want pupils to learn. This is well sequenced and enables pupils to remember more over time. This is more embedded in the specialist areas than in the core curriculum.

Staff at LeAF have considerable expertise in their subject area. Many have been professionals within the sports or performing arts industries. The school and trust provide further opportunities for the continued professional development of staff. They value and make good use of these. As a result, staff feel well supported and enjoy working at the school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive within their chosen specialist subject. Staff get to know them well. They are well supported and follow the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. However, within the core curriculum, the targets for pupils with SEND are not always precise or reviewed often enough.

Pupils read regularly for pleasure in school. They are introduced to a range of diverse and interesting texts. The school has identified pupils who need additional support with their reading. This extra help is in the early stages of being implemented.

Staff and pupils enjoy positive, mutually respectful relationships. Pupils learn the desired behaviours for a professional career in their chosen area. The school responds swiftly to any isolated incidents of derogatory language. They ensure there is follow-up education as well as an appropriate consequence. As a result, pupils feel safe. They have confidence in adults to help them with any worries or concerns.

The personal development curriculum is a strength of the school. Pupils learn about important issues such as healthy relationships, knife crime and how to manage grief. Additionally, staff use their knowledge of pupils to enhance their understanding further. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of social media, while also considering how to build a positive profile to support their career. Pupils develop a confident understanding of fundamental British values.

Discussions about pupils' potential destinations are woven into all parts of school life. Pupils receive regular and independent careers advice. Students in the sixth form benefit from the school's strong links with industry and higher education establishments. Past pupils who attended the school often return to inspire current pupils. Many pupils change their intended pathways, as the school opens their eyes to new possibilities.

Leaders, and the trust, monitor patterns and trends around attendance. They work effectively with pupils and their parents to encourage more regular attendance. As a result, the school's overall attendance is improving. However, there are still too many pupils, who are often disadvantaged, that are persistently absent from school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not checked that pupils with SEND have precise targets that are reviewed regularly to support their progress through the curriculum. As a result, the support they receive in the classroom is not always as precise as it could be. Additionally, the school does not have a secure enough understanding of how well these pupils are doing. The trust should ensure there is strong oversight of the provision for pupils with SEND.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 138385 |
| Local authority | Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole |
| Inspection number | 10344635 |
| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy studio school |
| Age range of pupils | 13 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 471 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 189 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Alison Beane |
| CEO of the trust | Fay MacRitchie |
| Principal | Nadine Lapskas |
| Website | www.leafstudio.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 22 and 23 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- LeAF Studio School is part of Authentic Education Group Limited.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school has three off-site providers for post-16 provision. They are located at:

Rockley Park, Napier Road, Hamworthy, Poole BH15 4LZ; Dorset School of Acting, Lighthouse Theatre, 21 Kingland Road, Poole BH15 1UG; Bournemouth Academy of Modern Music, 855 Ringwood Road, Bournemouth BH11 8NE.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 held discussions with the principal, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, other senior leaders (including from the three off-site post-16 providers), the chief education officer for the trust, a trustee, and the chair of the local academy board.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, sport and performing arts. The latter included dance and drama. 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

Inspection team

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