

# Mountjoy School

Tunnel Road, Beaminster, Dorset DT8 3HB

**Inspection dates** 24–25 February 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Since the last inspection the new headteacher has provided clear, decisive leadership. She has effectively tackled any poor performance and ensured good standards in all areas of the school.
- All teachers monitor the quality of teaching for the subject they lead. They provide good leadership to their department teams. As a result, all teachers strongly drive improvements.
- Senior leaders regularly check how well pupils are learning. Changes are made to the way pupils are taught when needed.
- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics is good.
- All pupils show very positive attitudes to their learning, and produce work they are proud of. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding.
- The school is effective in ensuring that all pupils are safe.
- School staff provide excellent support to pupils and their families. As a result pupils make impressive gains in their self-confidence and personal development.
- Attendance is good.
- Teaching in the sixth form is closely matched to each learner's interests and ability. As a result they all make successful transitions to the next stage beyond school.
- The good early years provision helps all children make a confident and productive start at the school.
- Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They ensure that good standards are maintained.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, work is not well matched to pupils' abilities. Work is sometimes too difficult or too easy.
- Progress is not consistently strong for some year groups, and in some subjects.
- Not all pupils have access to the most suitable ways of learning to meet their particular needs.
- Improvement planning is not always focused enough on the most important issues.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that school improvement priorities are sharply focused on achieving outstanding outcomes for all pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding, by:
  - ensuring that lessons are planned to meet the individual needs of all pupils
  - further developing the multi-sensory impairment learning approach so that more pupils can benefit from it.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since her appointment the headteacher has worked relentlessly to improve all aspects of the school's work. She has confidently challenged any poor performance, and has insisted that improvements are quickly made. She has created a very positive culture, expecting high standards throughout the school, which is strongly supported by both governors and staff.
- An effective model of distributed leadership has been established. All teachers hold responsibility for improving teaching in a subject, and developing the quality of practice for staff in their department. As a result the authority to monitor the school's work, and make required improvements, is shared across all senior and middle leaders.
- The headteacher has established a good range of approaches to check how well teachers are performing. This includes senior leaders regularly monitoring progress information, visiting lessons, and involving senior staff from other schools or external consultants to verify the school's judgements. Arrangements are in place so that all members of teaching staff have an annual review of their performance. Additional support plans are put in place for staff when the quality of their work requires improvement. There are very good links with a local special teaching school alliance, through which staff access a wide variety of training programmes.
- The governors ensure that teachers are held to account for the quality of their work. Any salary progression is directly linked to how well they are performing.
- The subjects that are taught for all age groups are carefully chosen to be meaningful and relevant to help pupils develop the skills and knowledge that they will need in later life. The new multi-sensory impairment approach is enabling some older pupils to make good progress, but the school can only currently provide this for a small proportion of pupils.
- The school pays careful attention to ensure that lessons help to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain, and that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs are well met. Experiences are planned to engage pupils in a wide range of activities that represent the breadth of cultural and religious beliefs held in the country. All pupils learn about democratic processes, for example, through their contact with the school council.
- Good use is made of the additional funding the school receives. The pupil premium fund has been used to provide small-group or individual teaching to help pupils make faster progress in English or mathematics. It has also been used to provide pupils with regular visits to a local farm, and to go horse riding. The year 7 catch-up funds have been used well to support individual pupils with either their reading or sensory needs.
- The additional sports funding has enabled the school to increase the time given for a member of staff to plan and run sports activities. Pupils have been able to take part in water sports activities, and have joined in a variety of different sporting events and competitions in the local community.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school over the last couple of years. A senior adviser has worked closely with the senior leadership team, providing at least half-termly visits, each focused on improving different aspects of the school's work.
- Governors and senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of the school's work. However, their approach to planning further improvements is not focused enough. Too many areas have been identified for improvement, limiting the time and resources available to each one. Actions are not prioritised against the biggest potential impact on pupils' outcomes.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Since the last inspection there have been a number of changes of personnel to the governing body, including a new Chair and vice-chair. The governors have a good knowledge of the school's work, including how well different groups of pupils are progressing, the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching team, and the impact of different funding streams. They effectively monitor the school's work, for example, through classroom visits, regular meetings with the headteacher, and scrutinising reports and information provided by senior staff.
  - Regular skills audits are carried out to check whether the governing body has the correct level of skills and knowledge to carry out its responsibilities. They have been very successful in recruiting suitably experienced people to fill any gaps. The school and local authority both provide regular training to

assist governors in their work.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff and governors receive the appropriate level of training. The school carefully tracks any concerns about individual pupils, to ensure that they are fully investigated. Procedures ensure that the correct checks are carried out on staff and visitors. The school identifies any risks to pupils or staff, and takes appropriate action to reduce these.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** is good

- The school uses a variety of methods to measure the progress of different groups of pupils. Most of these methods require teachers to make a judgement against a set of criteria. Teachers complete some of these together, or with teachers from other schools, to make sure that they are accurate.
- Teachers know their pupils well. As a result they plan lessons that interest and engage pupils in their learning. Pupils enjoy the tasks that are set for them.
- There is a positive climate for learning in classes. This is created by the strong relationships pupils have with their teachers and teaching assistants.
- Adults expect pupils to do their best. If pupils try to avoid doing their work adults quickly and confidently re-focus them on the task. Pupils generally respond well to this. Work in books shows that pupils produce work of good quality that is usually well matched to their ability.
- Good use is made of practical resources, which often help pupils improve their basic skills. For example, to help with adding numbers to 10 a colourful resource was used, which helped pupils think about the correct answer without having to count on their fingers.
- Inspectors saw examples of teachers using questioning to help pupils approach a problem in a different way, helping to challenge their thinking. However, at other times opportunities were missed where the use of better questioning would have been helpful.
- Both English and mathematics are taught well across the school. Pupils learn a wide range of skills in both subjects, which assist them in their ability to understand the world around them. A main focus of their literacy is ensuring that they develop their communication skills, so that they can let others know their thoughts and feelings.
- Teaching in multi-sensory impairment lessons was very carefully matched to the individual learning and sensory needs of each pupil. Each pupil had the individual support of an adult. Sufficient time was allowed for pupils to get the most from each activity before either having a short break, or moving on to the next activity. For example, one pupil was learning how to use a button to communicate whether he wanted to carry on playing the bells, or if he wanted to stop.
- In most lessons teaching is carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils. However, there are times when the work that is set is too hard for pupils, and adults tell pupils the answers. At other times work set is too easy for many of the pupils.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is outstanding

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Attendance is in line with similar schools. If pupils are not able to attend school for health reasons, school staff provide lessons in the pupil's home.
- The school employs a family liaison officer. She provides excellent support to families, helping them access services, or working closely with them during times of need. The school works very effectively with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are being met. Strong links with other special schools enables good practice in family support to be shared.
- A home-school book, which records daily progress and concerns both at home and at school, ensures that parents are able to be very involved in the work of the school.
- During the inspection a number of parents shared their views about the school. The vast majority were extremely positive about the school, and how well their child was progressing. One said 'my son has made so much improvement since attending Mountjoy. I am very pleased with the progress there.'
- Pupils develop the confidence to participate fully in a wide range of activities. Lunch and breaktimes are carefully planned to ensure that pupils use the time productively. For example, they are expected to use

their communication skills to ask for the food they want, cut up their own fruit if they can, and queue up quietly for their food.

- Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. In one lesson they were asked about ways to keep themselves safe. Pupils were able to explain what to do if a fire alarm goes off. Pupils are able to identify an adult who they would talk to if they were unhappy.
- Reward systems are well established in each class. As a result pupils are keen to comply with what is expected of them in order to obtain extra time on a computer, or to play on a trampoline.
- In discussions with the inspector, members of the school council were all able to talk about their favourite lessons and why they liked them. None of them were able to identify anything the school could do better.
- Careers advice is given through an external careers service. Representatives attend pupils' annual reviews to help with future planning. Pupils are supported to attend local careers fairs.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. When occasionally a pupil misbehaves staff swiftly and confidently intervene. As a result incidents are quickly resolved, and little time is wasted from learning.
- Pupils take great pride in the school and their work. Pupils' books show the high level of care and effort that they have put into their work. The school buildings are maintained in excellent condition, with no signs of damage or misuse. Pupils say how much they like the school.
- All behaviour incidents are recorded. Records are kept to a high standard.
- Careful monitoring and tracking of incidents of poor behaviour ensures that appropriate action is taken to address these. The school regularly analyses this information in order to identify trends over time.
- Since the headteacher started at the school there has been a significant reduction in the use of physical management of children. There are now very few incidents.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- When pupils start at the school their abilities are well below those typical for pupils of their age because of their special educational needs.
- The school sets targets for the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics for each pupil. Overall, pupils make good progress in achieving these. They develop skills and acquire knowledge in reading, writing, communication, number facts and in other areas of mathematics.
- Older pupils complete accredited training programmes. These include entry-level GCSEs.
- All groups of pupils make similar rates of progress. This includes the most-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils.
- According to the school's information, the rate of progress has not been consistent for all age groups and in all subjects over the last year. Progress in mathematics has been less strong than in English at times, as has progress in early years compared to other age groups.
- A scrutiny of pupils' work identifies that all groups of pupils are making similarly good progress. Pupils are helped to progress by receiving clear written feedback on how well they are learning, and how to improve their work.
- Pupils leave the school well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training. Last year all pupils transferred to a local college.

### **Early years provision**

**is good**

- Leadership and management of early years is good. The department is organised in a flexible way so that children are grouped according to their needs rather than their ages. This results in all children having work matched to their correct level of need.
- Teaching plans are based on the individual needs of each child. Each child's learning journey book shows the good progress they are making towards their expected development. Photographs are well used to illustrate this.

- Teaching is good. Teachers, the nursery nurse and teaching assistants work well together. Relationships are very strong between staff and children.
- Children enjoy school and develop their self-confidence well. They enjoy being helped to use mirrors, brushes and fingers to paint self-portraits. They are happy to look for bugs in the soil, and play in the water tray with each other.

### **16 to 19 study programmes**

**are good**

- Leaders and managers have high expectations that all learners can contribute effectively to the community. Areas of study are personalised to enable learners to be well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training.
- Learners have strong relationships with the teacher. They are keen to follow instructions and are happy to ask questions if they do not understand what they are supposed to do. Resources are used well to help develop learners' physical skills.
- Learners show a positive attitude to learning. They are able to apply themselves to their studies. Learners are encouraged to take risks in their learning within the safe environment of the school. There is a clear focus on developing learners' life skills.
- All learners are expected to take part in work experience. Parents are involved in helping to identify the most suitable placement.
- Outcomes are based on what each learner needs to achieve to be ready for the next stage in their lives. Learners make good progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113957
<b>Local authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002438

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	49
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	7
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tracy Scammell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jackie Shanks
<b>Telephone number</b>	01308 861155
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.mountjoy.dorset.sch.uk">www.mountjoy.dorset.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@mountjoy.dorset.sch.uk">office@mountjoy.dorset.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2–3 October 2013

## Information about this school

- Mountjoy School is a special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, together with a range of other complex learning needs such as profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- All pupils either have a statement of special educational needs, or an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- There is a much smaller proportion of girls to boys than average.
- No pupils are educated off-site in alternative provision.
- The school runs an outreach service supporting local mainstream schools.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited eight lessons. The headteacher accompanied inspectors for half of these observations. They also visited breaktimes, lunch and an assembly. The inspectors looked at pupils' books.
- A number of meetings were held with different individuals and groups. These included the school council, parents, family liaison officer, local authority adviser, governors, teachers and the headteacher.
- A wide range of documents were examined, including the information on the school website, behaviour and attendance records, safeguarding records, minutes from governors' meetings, pupil progress records and a variety of policies.
- Inspectors took into account 22 responses from Parent View, six comments made using the text facility on Parent View, and a letter from a parent.

## Inspection team

Andy Lole, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Deirdre Fitzpatrick

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