

Mountjoy School

Tunnel Road, Beaminster, Dorset, DT8 3HB

Inspection dates

2–3 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There are weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school that has led to a lack of direction over a period of time.
- Some legal responsibilities have not been fully carried out, such as the duty to manage the performance of all teachers and to set annual objectives to help them improve the quality of their work.
- Leaders of the key subject areas of English and mathematics have not played a full role in monitoring classroom teaching of their subjects.
- There has been a lack of challenge in some lessons for the most able pupils and in these lessons outcomes are not as good as they could be.
- Governance in the past has not been robust in challenging the leadership in order to improve the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the appointment of a new Chair of the Governing Body in March 2013, and subsequent appointment of several new governors, the governing body is fully meeting its legal duties. It is now focused on driving improvement and holding leadership to account, although it is too early to see the full impact of these developments.
- The sixth form is good. Since the last inspection opportunities for sixth form students to gain external accreditation have been introduced successfully.
- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary; they feel safe and really enjoy learning and being in their new school.
- During the recent absence of the headteacher the deputy headteacher has provided effective leadership for the school.
- Despite the issues around leadership, the quality of teaching has remained good because teachers have high expectations and so many pupils make good progress.
- The excellent facilities in the new school are being well utilised to support effective education.
- Opportunities to promote inclusion and outreach are being further promoted and developed with mainstream schools in the locality.

Information about this inspection

- A total of seven lessons were observed, some jointly with the deputy headteacher, so that every teacher was seen teaching, and a learning walk to all classes enabled the inspector to observe pupils' behaviour and the ways in which the facilities in this school are being used to support effective education.
- Meetings were held with the deputy headteacher in the absence of the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and other representative governors, a group of parents and carers and a representative from the local authority. A telephone call was held with the deputy headteacher of the adjacent secondary school with which the school shares its site.
- A total of 11 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire were taken into account, together with the school's own parental questionnaire. The content of an email received from one parent was also considered.
- A meeting was held with a group of pupils and opportunities were taken to talk to pupils in lessons and throughout the inspection in order to gather their views about the school.
- The views of staff were gathered from their replies to the staff questionnaire and from conversations.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation including information on pupils' progress and achievement and ways in which it is tracked and monitored, teachers' assessment and planning, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, and a range of policies and procedures including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Mountjoy School is for pupils with severe learning difficulties, together with a range of other complex learning needs that include profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Their learning difficulties are often complex as well as being severe.
- All pupils are supported through a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who attract the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils believed to be eligible for free schools or who are in the care of the local authority, for example, both groups being represented in school) is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic families or who speak English as an additional language are both well below average.
- Since the last inspection the school has moved to brand new purpose built premises in Beaminster and a new Chair of the Governing Body has been elected. There is no alternative provision elsewhere for secondary aged pupils, the school meeting all their needs.
- The headteacher was absent from school before and during the course of the inspection, with the leadership of the school being assumed by the deputy headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of senior leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the headteacher is able to provide clear and focused direction to the school
 - ensuring that the legal duty to check the quality of all teachers and to set annual objectives to help develop professional expertise is fully implemented
 - ensuring that the leaders for English and mathematics are able to play a full part in monitoring classroom teaching and learning for their key subjects.
- Ensure that work challenges all pupils in every class by ensuring that the most able are fully stretched in the work that is set for them and that all teachers have high expectations that will enable all pupils to fulfil their potential.
- Further extend and develop the inclusion and outreach work that is supporting the education of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in mainstream schools, utilising the expertise of the special school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Although the attainment of pupils is low because of their wider learning difficulties they make good progress from their individual starting points.
- While the large majority across all key stages are making progress that is at least in line with that expected nationally achievement is not yet outstanding because the proportion who are making better than expected progress is not yet large enough. This is because the school is not yet fully challenging its most able pupils so that they can reach their full potential.
- The school monitors the progress of different groups, including that of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. There is no difference in their progress, which reflects the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.
- Effective communication is promoted in a variety of ways including pictures and symbols, and signing for non-verbal pupils. This helps all pupils to communicate with those around them.
- Reading is promoted well for those who are able, including the use of phonics (understanding letters and the sounds they make). The school has acquired new schemes for reading and phonics (the sounds letter make). This results in pupils making good progress in their reading.
- Most join in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of their statements of special educational needs. Their work is carefully tracked and monitored, and is moderated between teachers from all the local authority's special schools to ensure accuracy. This shows children make good progress from very low starting points.
- In the sixth form students now gain external accreditation, which has been a positive development since the last inspection. This has been provided by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), although an audit undertaken by the school identified that there was not enough challenge for the most able. The school has therefore, since the start of the current school year, started to work towards Entry Level qualifications in order to address this.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next phases of their lives, with virtually all remaining in education in local colleges, at specialist residential colleges, or in provision such as that provided by Autism Wessex.
- The additional funding coming from the pupil premium is very well targeted, such as in the purchase of hand-held computer tablets which have proved very effective in promoting enjoyment of learning. The outcome is that 100% of the group made expected or better progress in both English and mathematics, a more positive outcome than that of pupils as a whole.
- Similarly, the additional funding provided for Year 7 literacy and numeracy has been targeted to raise the achievement in these specific areas, such as through the purchasing of new materials.
- The planning for the use of the new funding to promote sport and fitness has also been carefully targeted, in expanding opportunities to participate in activities with other special schools, for example.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good, with examples that are outstanding. Most pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching but work does not always fully challenge the most able to achieve all of which they are capable. This means teaching is not outstanding overall.
- Teachers have high expectations and show commitment to their pupils. This applies equally to the very effective team of teaching assistants. Teamwork is strong, and opportunities to plan and reflect together are reflected in good provision.
- In the best lessons teachers use questioning very effectively, for example in a class of the oldest pupils studying the theme of India, pupils were able to give clear proof that they understood and

had learned what the teacher had expected by the way they answered his questions.

- Throughout the school and in every key stage pupils enjoy their learning, readily engaging in activities at their own level. There is a very wide range of academic and physical ability in each class and for those with the most severe levels of disability the excellent facilities available in this new school promotes effective access to learning.
- The use of computer technology is effective and a range of programs support learning across the whole spectrum of ability. Highly specialist equipment enhances opportunities for communication for some pupils with profound levels of disability.
- Pupils in each class follow the same lessons, which are often based on themes and topics. These follow the National Curriculum in a modified and individualised form that allows access to learning at many levels that meet individual needs.
- Each teacher is responsible for an individual subject and care is taken to ensure that each is sufficiently represented in topics. Specialist rooms, such as the art room, support effective practical activities.
- Sufficient focus is given to teaching English and mathematics but while the subject leaders have time to promote their own areas, in line with all subject leaders, they are not currently given opportunity to monitor and promote the classroom teaching of their key subjects.
- Specialist teachers and teaching assistants have developed effective outreach programmes that give excellent support to teachers and pupils with a range of additional physical and learning needs in mainstream schools. The new school is looking to promote new ways in which inclusion and outreach with schools in the area can be extended, including with the secondary school on the same site.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Many pupils display very challenging behaviour as a consequence of their learning disability. The school's clear and effective behaviour policy enables this to be dealt with extremely effectively by teachers and teaching assistants. During lesson observations no time was lost to learning as a result of bad behaviour.
- Behaviour over time has been an outstanding feature of school life, this also being reflected in the last inspection report. This is equally true of classrooms and around the whole school.
- There have been no permanent exclusions and the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly. Some pupils arrive after failure at previous schools and go on to do very well.
- Staff are trained in how to use restraint as a last resort and when used it is carefully logged. Detailed analysis over time enables the school to look for any patterns in its use. De-escalation is a far more common approach and staff are extremely skilled in doing this.
- Parents of pupils who have moved to the school from elsewhere say how quickly their children have settled and how, over time, skills of independence are promoted alongside a focus on developing social skills which support positive behaviour. It helps pupils develop a sense of responsibility for their own actions and think about what they are doing.
- Pupils say that one of the reasons why they like school so much is that everyone gets on well together. While bullying in its different forms, including cyber bullying, is covered in lessons it is simply not an issue in school.
- Issues around personal safety, including internet safety, are promoted in conjunction with the local youth service and delivered in a youth centre, which gives an added focus and importance to pupils who are potentially very vulnerable.
- Staff, pupils, parents and carers all believe strongly that the school is a very safe environment. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average for special schools. A considerable amount of absence is a consequence of medical conditions and appointments.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good because over a period of time the school's senior leadership has failed to provide clear direction for the school. Efforts to rectify this by the governing body, with good support from the local authority that still continues, are now addressing this issue.
- Underlying this weakness was a failure by former governors to set challenging objectives to promote effective leadership, which in turn led to a failure of leadership to establish similar clear objectives for teachers to support their professional training.
- Compounding this have been difficulties around the move to the new premises which have meant, for example, that the leaders for English and mathematics are no longer undertaking direct observations of the teaching of their key subjects.
- The issues around weakness in leadership were first identified following the election of a new Chair of the Governing Body and the subsequent appointment of several new governors who brought with them specific skills and experience relevant to school leadership. They have brought a clear focus on the need to address the previous failures and over the past year have introduced a range of decisive and effective steps aimed at raising the quality and effectiveness of leadership.
- During the recent absence of the headteacher the deputy headteacher has provided effective leadership so that the school has been able to focus on helping pupils to do their best. Governors and senior staff are now more focused on producing effective self-evaluation and improvement planning to take the school forward.
- Arrangements are in place to ensure that arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching as part of the wider arrangements for managing the performance of staff are in place, so this year all staff will receive the review of their performance to which they are entitled.
- Teachers understand there is clear link between pay and performance and those teachers who are on the upper pay scale gladly accept additional responsibilities in return.
- Some elements of leadership have always been effective. The range of topics covered in lessons meets the needs of pupils and enables all to have an equal opportunity to access learning at an appropriate level, even when their disabilities or learning needs are severe.
- Links with parents and carers are extremely strong and the introduction of a family liaison officer, partly funded through the pupil premium, reflects the very effective way that links between school and home have always been a priority.
- Links with other professionals are equally strong, including those that support the very effective arrangements for safeguarding. Joint working and the school's decision to buy in additional therapy support are very much appreciated by parents and carers, as is the commitment by the primary care trust's paediatrician who works with the school to organise appointments in the room specifically provided in school to promote inter-agency working.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the current governing body came into effect it has identified and robustly addressed the weaknesses identified in the leadership of the school, although as yet it is too soon to see sustained outcomes. Individual governors have clear areas of responsibility that sees them coming into school to monitor. Governors now have a clear understanding of information on the achievement of pupils, the quality of teaching and learning, and the financial situation, including the impact of the targeted spending of the Year 7 catch-up, sports and pupil premium. When necessary they have ensured they benefit from training. They have now established clear systems for the management of staff pay and understand the links between this and performance, including the procedures for handling underperformance. They are aware of how the performance of their school compares with that of similar schools. They are now in a position where they are carrying out all their legal responsibilities, including those for safeguarding which are extremely effective.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113957
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	429627

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Lay-Flurrie
Headteacher	James Franzen
Date of previous school inspection	March 2011
Telephone number	01308 861155
Fax number	01308 861929
Email address	office@mountjoy.dorset.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

