

# Inspection of The Stable School

12 Dudmoor Farm Road, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 6AQ

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Inspection dates: 8 to 10 July 2025

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at The Stable School feel listened to and well cared for. When they are having a difficult day, staff skilfully support them to make positive choices and reflect on their actions. As a result, pupils feel safe and want to learn. They value the warm and respectful relationships they have with trusted adults at the school.

The curriculum has undergone significant change in the last year. There are now higher expectations for what pupils can achieve. Mostly, pupils learn core subjects from specialist teachers. In key stages 3 and 4, pupils also learn a broad range of other subjects, such as carpentry, digital technology and media studies. Pupils particularly enjoy philosophy and ethics, which teaches them about different viewpoints and provides opportunities for them to respectfully discuss their own views about important issues.

The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, listening carefully to what pupils want to do. Pupils love their weekly opportunities to take part in outdoor activities, such as paddleboarding, horse riding, surfing, cycling and hill-climbing. In addition, weekly swimming lessons and the Duke of Edinburgh Award are both part of the main curriculum. These activities help pupils to build confidence and resilience, as well as learn new skills and contribute to the wider community.

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

The school offers a broad and ambitious curriculum. Each subject is carefully designed, taking into account pupils' different starting points. The curriculum in each subject ensures that pupils are building knowledge over time. Typically, pupils are able to recall prior learning and apply this in new contexts. However, much of this has only been in place for a year. This means that the way in which it is delivered still needs refining. For example, sometimes the work given to pupils does not meet their individual needs or is not well matched to the intended learning. At these times, pupils can find the work too easy or too difficult. As a result, sometimes pupils do not learn efficiently.

The school prepares younger pupils well for a range of qualifications at key stage 4. Many pupils enjoy these more practical subjects, such as carpentry. Pupils produce work of a high standard alongside developing important mathematical knowledge.

The school has raised the profile of reading in the school. There is a well-resourced library with carefully chosen texts for each age group. This is helping pupils to develop more positive attitudes towards reading. The school has identified which pupils have significant gaps in their reading knowledge. However, much of the work to support these pupils is in its infancy. This is particularly the case for pupils in key stage 4. Staff are developing the expertise needed to deliver a systematic programme of support to weaker readers, but it is too early to see the impact of this work.

All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school identifies the specific needs of individual pupils effectively. It considers each pupil holistically, regularly reviewing the provision in place and listening to their views and those of their families. As a result, the majority of pupils successfully transition into the school following extended periods out of education or having experienced significant disruptions to their education. Since the previous inspection, the number of parents who would recommend the school has risen. Parents and carers are typically very positive about the individualised support their children receive to ensure their special educational needs and/or disabilities needs are met.

Most of the time, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Staff are experts in delivering therapeutic support, when needed. Pupils state that any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. The reward system, based around the expectation 'right thing, right place, right time' is well understood by pupils and motivates them to make positive choices.

The school's personal, social, health and economic curriculum underpins all its work. Pupils learn about their rights and how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They learn about how to respect one another and the impact of using derogatory language. The school utilises its rural location to teach pupils about caring for the environment. Pupils regularly take trips, including to local businesses, to support their understanding of different careers. The school provides a rich programme of careers information, advice and guidance. It has strong links with local colleges and the university, which help broaden pupils' horizons and raise their aspirations. Each term, pupils make products to sell and raise money for charity. As a result, they learn how to be good citizens and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

The proprietor understands their statutory duties well. This ensures the school consistently meets the independent school standards, including schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Proprietor body leaders have supported the school well through a period of change, including appointing a new principal. Leaders within the school have galvanised staff and have created systems that enable them to work effectively with pupils. There is a strong team in place ready to make further improvements where needed.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The implementation of the curriculum is not consistently effective. This means that some pupils are not learning as well they could. The school must ensure that staff have strong pedagogical knowledge and provide activities for pupils that are well matched to the intended learning, and pupils' individual needs, so that they are able to learn more effectively.

- The school's work to support pupils who have fallen behind in reading is in its infancy. This means that some older pupils who require additional support are not benefitting from the school's chosen programme. The school must ensure that staff have the expertise to support these pupils, so that they can improve their reading, access the wider curriculum, and are well prepared for life beyond school.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147198
<b>DfE registration number</b>	839/6012
<b>Local authority</b>	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
<b>Inspection number</b>	10391790
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent Special School
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	57
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Happy Learning Centre Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Tracey Storey
<b>Principal</b>	Denise Carpenter
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£42,980 to £72,630
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 116274
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thestableschool.com">www.thestableschool.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@thestableschool.co.uk">info@thestableschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	21 and 23 November 2023

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the proprietor board has appointed a new substantive principal. The new principal took up post in January 2025.
- The Stable School is an independent special school. It caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. These include social, emotional and mental health needs and autism spectrum disorder. All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan funded by three local authorities.
- The school is registered for 65 pupils between the ages of 6 and 16 years. Currently, there are no pupils in key stage 1.
- The school does not currently use any 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
- The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders and other staff.
- The lead inspector also met with members of the proprietor body, including the chair of the community board.
- The lead inspector also spoke with representatives from the local authority and the virtual school.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also met with pupils to gain their views of school life and observed breaktimes.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted via Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also talked to parents at school and

by telephone. An inspector also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's survey for school staff.

### **Inspection team**

Victoria Griffin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Malcolm Willis

Ofsted Inspector

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