

3 Dimensions

Chardleigh House, Chardleigh Green, Wadeford, Chard, Somerset TA20 3AJ

Inspection dates

19–21 June 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and directors have ensured that the independent school standards (ISS) continue to be met. A good standard of education has been sustained.
- Pupils benefit from high-quality therapies offered by specialists and teaching staff. As a result, pupils are able to manage their own behaviours well. The vast majority of pupils attend well.
- Staff foster exceptionally strong relationships with pupils. Pupils trust the staff they work with to support them in their academic, personal and social development.
- Directors have invested in both increasing staffing levels and improving the premises. They have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and use resources appropriately. They recognise the need to strengthen record-keeping to reflect the good practice and to improve systems and procedures.
- Leaders ensure that staff are kept up to date by providing training, including that related to safeguarding. Clear and open communication channels mean that school leaders are able to involve agencies in good time when needed.
- Teaching staff make good use of pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans when planning learning. As a result, pupils make good progress, particularly in their personal and social development. Occasionally, learning is not planned as precisely as it should be.
- Leaders use school visits and off-site activities to enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils talk eloquently and enthusiastically about their learning following a visit.
- Pupils make strong progress in reading. This is the result of a well-thought-through strategy for teaching phonics and building pupils' reading skills. Leaders recognise there is more to do to ensure that pupils make the same rate of progress in their writing or when they attend alternative provision.
- Staff ensure that older pupils receive the high-quality careers advice and guidance they need in order to continue to further education or training.
- Leaders have implemented the addition of key stage 2 to the school successfully since the previous standard inspection.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teaching staff:
 - make more effective use of assessment information when planning lessons
 - carefully sequence activities so that pupils have a secure understanding of the topics they study
 - suitably challenge pupils to make more rapid progress, particularly in writing.
- Strengthen leadership and management further, by:
 - improving record-keeping so that it accurately reflects the good practice that is in place
 - making better use of monitoring and analysis of information to improve systems and procedures
 - monitoring more closely the progress of the few pupils who attend alternative provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and directors have maintained a good standard of education since the previous inspection. The quality of care and personal development of pupils is outstanding. The proprietor and leaders have ensured that the ISS continue to be met in full.
- Leaders and directors demonstrate strong leadership and a deep commitment and care for each pupil. They know the pupils and their families well and work closely with them to ensure that pupils make strong progress, particularly in their social and personal development.
- Leaders' self-assessment is accurate. The directors and leaders are aware of the school's strengths and areas that require further improvement. They have successfully tackled the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous standard inspection.
- Leaders work diligently with local authorities who place pupils at the school. They are advocates for pupils and their families to ensure that pupils receive the education provision they need, even when discussions with local authorities become very protracted.
- Each pupil benefits from a bespoke curriculum which builds on their personal interests to give them the knowledge and understanding they need in a wide range of subjects. This curriculum is enhanced by educational visits and other experiences, including the school's own forest schools.
- The few parents who responded to Parent View are pleased with the improvements they see in their children as a result of the school's work. Parents comment on the strong communication between home and school. These effective links between home and school ensure that their children are safe, happy and make good progress. Inspectors found parents' confidence to be well-founded.
- Leaders support staff well in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. Every member of staff who completed Ofsted's staff survey is proud to work at the school. They are supported well and benefit from a wide range of training, including safeguarding training, to help them improve in their own effectiveness.
- The premises are well maintained. Teaching spaces are bright and airy. The outdoor space is well equipped with climbing and other equipment. Leaders deploy staff carefully to ensure that pupils are supervised well at break and lunchtimes. Staff manage risks appropriately so that pupils can enjoy a wide range of games and activities.
- School staff maintain risk assessments and admission and attendance registers. They provide information to placing authorities when required, for example annual reviews of pupils' EHC plans. Occasionally, the quality of record-keeping and administration is not as rigorous as it needs to be.
- Very few pupils attend alternative provision. Leaders' oversight of the quality of alternative provision is not rigorous enough. This means they cannot ensure that pupils receive the programme that is agreed and that they make the best possible progress.

Governance

- The school is overseen by four directors. One director has specific responsibility for monitoring the quality of the education provision. Another director has the specific responsibility for overseeing safeguarding arrangements. Good use is made of consultants and therapists to ensure that directors and leaders receive an external view on how well the school is operating. As a result, directors have an accurate view of pupils' progress.
- Directors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas that need to be improved. They are sensitive to local needs and, in response, have added provision for pupils in key stage 2 to the school's offer successfully.
- Directors are fully involved in the appointment of teaching staff. They are clear about their expectations and in ensuring that applicants have sufficient understanding of pupils' special educational needs (SEN) to be able to teach and care for the pupils to a high standard. They ensure that resources are made available to train staff to improve their work further. They have recently appointed a teacher-in-charge to strengthen the monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Through their own reviews, directors have identified areas of the site that require further investment. During the inspection, works began to develop an outdoor play space specifically for the younger pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders with specific responsibilities for safeguarding pupils have a good understanding of their duties and act swiftly when they have concerns. They ensure that teaching staff teach pupils about the hazards they may face when undertaking different activities, for example when lighting a fire in forest school. They also remind pupils about the risks when using the internet. As a result, pupils know how to keep themselves safe.
- Members of staff have the knowledge they need to be able to identify signs of harm. Regular training ensures that they stay up to date, for example regarding child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. They know how to report their concerns and have justifiable confidence that they will be acted upon by leaders.
- Parents share important information with the school as a result of the open communication channels that exist. This allows school staff to plan learning for pupils to explore any risks and take action when necessary.
- The requirements of the ISS regarding safeguarding are met, including the publication of the school's safeguarding policy. The arrangements take into account the latest guidance from the Secretary of State.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching staff ensure that pupils' individual special educational needs are met well because learning is closely aligned to the objectives contained in pupils' individual learning plans and their EHC plans. The evidence provided for annual reviews is detailed and helps to ensure that the provision for each pupil is appropriately altered to meet their needs.

- Staff build learning around topics that interest pupils. For example, pupils explore social history through the study of a local football club over the years. Teachers use the curriculum well to extend pupils' vocabulary and deepen their understanding of language and communication.
- The teaching of reading is good. Teaching staff implement a carefully planned and progressive programme for the teaching of phonics and reading. As a result of good teaching, this programme is ensuring that pupils develop their ability to read and comprehend the content well. Teaching staff make good use of creative strategies to engage reluctant readers.
- Educational visits are used well to enhance pupils' experience. These opportunities allow pupils to apply their learning to real-life situations. As pupils mature, they are given opportunities to develop their independent living skills.
- Teachers' expectations are generally high. There is a careful balance between the level of challenge and pupils' emotional state. However, for pupils who recently joined the school the level of challenge does not always rise quickly enough. Consequently, the rate of progress is not as rapid as it could be. This is particularly the case for less-able pupils.
- Many teaching staff are skilled in helping pupils to reflect on their learning, identifying where they are secure in their understanding and areas they need to work on further. This includes reflections on their personal and social development, which are very strong. However, assessment is not routinely used to influence teachers' planning of learning, particularly in English. Sometimes, errors go unchecked so pupils have an inaccurate view of what they know and understand.
- Occasionally, insufficient thought is given to the sequencing of activities. As a result, pupils do not have the knowledge they need to ensure that they have the security in the depth of understanding in the subjects they study. The use of questioning by adults to check and deepen pupils' thinking is variable. Some do this particularly well. However, there are times when teaching staff could identify more precisely what pupils need to learn next to accelerate their progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They trust the adults they work with and are supported exceptionally well in their personal and social development. Teaching staff give much thought to developing pupils' independence. They plan activities where pupils can learn how to cope in different settings and understand how society works.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Teaching staff manage pupils well. Humour is used to good effect to maintain pupils' interests. They make effective use of rest breaks to implement strategies which have been devised by therapists. This enables pupils to maintain their focus on learning.
- The school provides a stable environment where pupils can work with and confide in staff. Pupils show respect towards members of staff and each other. In 'show and tell' sessions they ask questions which show a curiosity in their classmates' interests.

- Trips, visits and off-site activities, including pupils using public transport, are used effectively to support pupils' independent living skills and enhance their experiences and understanding of risk.
- Pupils benefit from the therapies they receive. These help pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, their motor skills and to regulate their own behaviours.
- British values are promoted well. Pupils are taught about democracy and the rule of law and are introduced to public institutions, such as the police. Older pupils explore equality of opportunity and their own identity.
- Older pupils receive independent careers advice and guidance which they use to identify qualifications that will help them achieve their goals. School staff support pupils well, for example by arranging work experience in the relevant employment sector. As a result, the vast majority of pupils continue to further education or training in their chosen field.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The reward system is particularly effective in promoting high standards of behaviour. Pupils are proud of their 'positive behaviour books'. These books give examples of pupils being rewarded for their consideration of others. They are meaningful and purposeful in building up pupils' self-awareness and self-esteem.
- Pupils who displayed very challenging behaviours when they join the school quickly learn how to manage their emotions and feelings. Consequently, both the number and severity of incidents of misbehaviour fall rapidly in a short period of time.
- There have been no exclusions since the previous inspection.
- When pupils demonstrate challenging behaviours or are very anxious, staff members are highly skilled and manage these situations well. Strategies devised by therapists and consultants are used effectively to help pupils return to a calm state. As pupils learn how to manage their learning, the number of incidents falls significantly.
- Attendance is in line with the rate seen typically in special schools. Persistent absenteeism is low. Due to the small numbers of pupils, an absence has a disproportionate effect on the data and obscures the very high attendance rates that the vast majority of pupils have.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress towards the objectives set in their EHC plans. The school's individual learning plans identify clear goals to help pupils understand what they have to do to improve in their academic, personal and social development.
- Pupils make rapid progress in their reading. The school's strategy of teaching phonics ensures that pupils make strong progress in building their understanding. As a result, pupils use phonics to decode unfamiliar words. On occasion, pupils are less secure in the use of phonics when writing and so their progress in writing is not as rapid.

- Teachers ensure that pupils receive the support and challenge they need in order to make good progress in reading. For example, in key stage 2 pupils develop their skills to read between the lines and identify where an author infers a meaning. Pupils enjoy reading different styles of writing in English and other subjects.
- Pupils in key stage 4 work towards a range of qualifications, including GCSEs, functional skills in English and mathematics, entry level certificates and unit awards.
- There are no discernible differences in the progress made between children looked after and other pupils. Equally, boys and girls progress at similar rates. However, less able pupils often progress more slowly.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of subjects across the curriculum. Effective use of trips and visits deepen pupils' understanding of historical events and geography. Interesting lessons also enable pupils to understand core knowledge.
- Pupils who are working well below the standards expected for their age receive a suitably challenging curriculum. Consequently, they make good and sometimes rapid progress. Pupils learn how to communicate, listen and develop effective relationships with staff and each other through play. Effective teaching and teachers' awareness of the early developmental stages in reading, writing and mathematics enable pupils to make good progress in these areas of learning.
- Leaders are justifiably proud when, as a result of their work, pupils return successfully to mainstream education and sustain their place. The majority of the older pupils who leave the school continue onto further education or training.
- In the very few cases where alternative provision is used, the reports on pupils' progress are not strong enough from all providers. Therefore, the progress pupils make cannot be carefully evaluated against their individual learning plans or EHC plans.

School details

Unique reference number	134909
DfE registration number	933/6207
Inspection number	10047184

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	3 Dimensions Care Ltd
Education manager	Caroline Mousseau
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,000–£61,675
Telephone number	01460 65611
Website	www.3dimensions.org.uk
Email address	admin@3dimensions.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–30 April 2015

Information about this school

- 3 Dimensions is an independent special school that is registered to provide education for boys and girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. Many pupils also have attachment disorders or have experienced trauma. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school opened in 2004 and is currently registered for 16 pupils between seven and 25 years of age. Currently, 11 pupils attend, one on a part-time basis.
- There are currently no pupils in the sixth form or adult learners.

- The school is owned by 3 Dimensions, a registered company. It is set in a rural location near the town of Chard, in Somerset. The company also owns two children's homes in the area, which provide residential accommodation for some pupils.
- The school currently uses two alternative providers: Core Creative Education Community Interest Company and Somerset Equus Limited.
- The school is overseen by an education manager. She is supported by a teacher-in-charge. The school employs a range of therapists to assess pupils' therapeutic needs, design programmes which teaching staff implement, and monitor pupils' progress.
- The school's previous standard inspection was undertaken from 28 to 30 April 2015, when the school was judged to be good. Following a material change inspection in June 2016, the registration authority extended the age range of the school to accept pupils from the age of seven.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects in all classes. In addition, inspectors looked at pupils' work and information kept by the school about pupils' learning and progress.
- One inspector observed some pupils learning at the school's off-site forest school.
- The inspectors held discussions with pupils, staff members and leaders throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector held meetings with two directors, the education manager, a therapist and other members of staff. He scrutinised the curriculum plan and other resources provided by the school.
- The lead inspector spoke with an officer from a placing authority by telephone.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. School policies and documentation, including risk assessments, were also examined. In addition, the lead inspector undertook a tour of the premises.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 14 members of staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire for staff and considered the views of two parents who responded to Parent View.

Inspection team

Iain Freeland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stewart Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector

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