

Victoria Education Centre

12 Lindsay Road, Branksome Park, Poole, Dorset BH13 6AS

Inspection dates

2–3 July 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are committed to providing the best provision for all pupils whatever their special needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. They are cared for well. Safeguarding is effective.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school from their individual starting points. Many overcome significant barriers or previous negative educational experiences, so they thrive at Victoria.
- Teaching is interesting and engaging. However, it is not always challenging enough for some more-able pupils. Sometimes, pupils are not encouraged to think for themselves.
- The education board has taken appropriate steps to strengthen its governance of the school. Members now have an accurate view of the school and are developing appropriate plans for the future.
- Pupils appreciate a wide range of different sporting and cultural activities. These widen pupils' experiences. They experience success.
- Leaders keep the curriculum under review. They are building on good multi-disciplinary practice already in the school, as well as national and international approaches. The curriculum is not always monitored well enough to ensure that all activities contribute to a pupil's overall development.
- Children in the early years and students in the post-16 provision make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage.
- Leaders manage a complex organisation well. They are very knowledgeable and thoughtful about their work. Even so, they do not always question routine practice rigorously enough to ensure it is as effective as it should be. Roles and accountabilities are not sufficiently clear.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen leadership and management so that:
 - monitoring and evaluation enable all leaders to share an accurate view of the quality of the provision and how it impacts on the experience of the pupil
 - roles and accountabilities are clear and actions are followed through consistently.
- Continue to strengthen the curriculum by:
 - clarifying its overall intent
 - clarifying the expectations of the proportions of time for academic learning, age-appropriate experiences, care and therapy for individuals and groups of pupils
 - ensuring that pupils' experience is coherent across the school day and always leads to pupils making the best progress they can
 - ensuring that pupils are always challenged
 - encouraging pupils to be more active learners.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders are committed to improving the life chances of all pupils. They are very knowledgeable about different approaches to helping pupils learn. They know pupils, their needs and their past experiences extremely well.
- The substantive headteacher left recently and there have been changes in management by the Livability charity. Throughout this period of significant change, the interim leadership and substantive senior leaders have worked hard to maintain good practice and ensure pupils are making good progress. They are developing a shared understanding of the school's effectiveness to tackle priorities.
- Leaders carry out regular activities to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning in lessons. They ensure that lessons are of high quality and, where there is room for improvement, effective support or professional development is put in place.
- Middle leaders take their responsibility for their different areas of the curriculum seriously. They are very well informed so that curriculum design benefits from up-to-date research on practice and pupils' needs. There have been recent changes in the mathematics curriculum to strengthen teaching. Writing has also been improved.
- Leaders have devised a well-planned sensory curriculum so that education, health and care plans are integral and targets are agreed by a multi-disciplinary team with parents. This close attention to specific targets means that particular areas are prioritised, regularly assessed and small steps captured and built upon.
- Leaders have developed thorough systems for capturing the learning of pupils. They regularly review progress and work with other schools to moderate their work. They report to parents and carers regularly. Any pupil at risk of underachievement is quickly identified, reasons explored, and additional support or interventions quickly put in place.
- Leaders are not always as knowledgeable as they should be about the implementation of the curriculum throughout the school day and therefore the experience of pupils. While monitoring of teacher-led lessons is regular, leaders do not always check the quality of other activities or lessons led by other professionals. Leaders do not always make sure that the balance of time given to therapy, care and academic or classroom learning is effective to ensure that pupils, whatever their age or needs, make the best progress they can.
- Leaders and staff provide a rich variety of experiences that enhance pupils' lives. Frequently, pupils 'push the boundaries to independence'. Pupils participate in sports, arts and cultural experiences in school and in the community. Pupils broadcast regularly on VIBE radio, work toward Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and contribute to the school through the school council or by being eco-warriors. Through the curriculum and the school's ethos of trust and respect, they develop appropriate values well.
- Leaders work hard to keep parents and carers informed. They regularly report on their children's progress and work with them to ensure that targets are shared and approaches are successful. The vast majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted

survey are extremely satisfied. Comments included that their children were 'super happy' and 'thriving' in a school that is 'happy and positive'.

Governance of the school

- The education board of the Livability charity recognised that it needed to strengthen the oversight of the school. Following an in-depth review, members have developed a structure that enables the school to be monitored and supported effectively. They have appointed the interim headteacher and a new director of education. The board is now overseeing the process for appointing the substantive headteacher. Minutes of the education board show the rigour and challenge to the school. The board uses external professionals well to review the school's work and provide additional information about the quality of the provision.
- Although they are new to their particular roles, members of the local improvement board know the school well. They are aware of strengths and areas for development. They are an effective voice of the local community, staff and parents to further strengthen scrutiny as the school goes forward.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The responses of the vast majority of parents, staff and pupils to surveys and to inspectors' questions express a confidence in the way leaders work to keep pupils safe.
- The high quality of care underpins the safeguarding culture in the school. Local agencies, such as the local area designated officer (LADO), are very satisfied with the school's work to ensure safeguarding, and feel that there is good consultation and information-sharing.
- Leaders ensure that staff are well trained. Systems such as the dispensing of medication or supporting pupils with gastrostomy feeding, tracheostomy suction or oxygen care are appropriate.
- Any concerns about a pupil are reported and followed up. First aiders and nurses use their expertise to explore issues. Leaders respond quickly and meet as a team to keep cases under close review to ensure pupils are safe. Data is reported to Livability, which provides ongoing support. Leaders recognise that some of their recording of agreed actions is too vague and aspects of responding to complaints, incidents and safeguarding need synthesising further to improve practice even more.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers, support staff and therapists persistently focus on removing barriers to learning for pupils. They provide an environment where pupils feel safe to learn and have the necessary aids or equipment to help them.
- Teachers provide interesting activities and pupils engage with them. Sensory stories and drama lessons, for example, stimulate pupils' interest and encourage communication and interaction.

- Staff approach the same topic in different ways so that pupils can access the knowledge. They enable pupils to communicate using technology, gesture, vocalisation, sign or symbol, so that learning can be captured and recorded.
- Therapists support teaching and learning by carefully identifying the skills the pupils need to develop. They work intensively to help pupils develop these. In some areas of the curriculum, the work of the therapists and teachers is seamlessly integrated. In physical education (PE), for example, pupils devise their own games. They develop tactics, collaborate and compete against each other. At the same time, they practise movement so that they develop strength and meet their therapy goals.
- Regular assessment means that teachers are clear about what pupils need to learn next. The majority of lessons are then planned in detail so that they incorporate specific targets that teachers and support staff focus on.
- Sometimes, expectations are too low and the work is not challenging enough. On occasions, activities are not age-appropriate or the learning is not planned well enough, particularly for more-able pupils, to develop subject knowledge sufficiently. Questioning does not always encourage pupils to think for themselves, to develop their ideas and reasoning, or to be more active learners.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff understand the needs of pupils well. They work effectively together to ensure that individual physical, emotional and health needs are met.
- Pupils are supported effectively in physical care and mobility. They become more independent.
- Pupils told inspectors about how very happy they are at school. They talked openly about their previous negative experiences at other schools. They now feel they are in a place where they are safe, learning more and becoming more independent.
- There are strong and respectful relationships between pupils, whatever their ability or disability. They talked about how welcome they felt when they arrived at the school and appreciate the friends they have made. They are adamant there is no bullying.
- The high quality of care and high staff to pupil ratio mean that pupils' needs are met quickly. At times, the well-intentioned actions of adults do not allow pupils to make a choice for themselves and challenge themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well supported in lessons and they demonstrate positive attitudes because teachers make lessons enjoyable and relationships with adults are strong.

- Pupils are polite and engaging. They readily communicate and make people feel welcome in their school, despite sometimes having considerable difficulties communicating.
- Familiar adults support pupils with complex sensory needs to be calm, by their close and kind attention. This means pupils are more responsive to learning. Staff ensure that those with communication or interaction difficulties have predictable environments and routines so that their anxiety is lessened.
- Leaders analyse patterns of behaviour regularly, including any incidents that require positive handling. They follow up issues to ensure that episodes are well managed and examine what adaptations can be put in place to avoid a re-occurrence.
- Leaders track the attendance of pupils closely and work with parents to ensure pupils attend regularly, despite some pupils having complex medical and emotional needs.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school with a wide range of starting points. Many have complex and profound needs, and some have moderate learning difficulties. Many pupils have additional needs such as complex health conditions or autism, in addition to their physical disabilities. Some pupils have recently joined from mainstream school and are expected to achieve accredited qualifications. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Evidence of pupils' progress comes in many forms. Staff precisely measure individual progress against targets developed from EHC plans and/or against progress within the national curriculum. Progress is regularly captured in individual achievement profiles through photographs or recording. This evidence, which is regularly reported to parents, shows that the vast majority of pupils make strong progress through the school.
- Many pupils with the most profound needs access learning more or learn to experience or respond in a more consistent manner. Some pupils learn to trust, attend and regulate their own behaviour. They may, for example, learn to vocalise consistently, turn towards a sound or a light, reach out or indicate their preference.
- Some pupils progress in a more academic curriculum. They learn sounds, letters, pictures and symbols to help them read and communicate. They then experience different genres through reading, which gives them a good appreciation of texts. They develop an understanding of mathematics, for example how to calculate and use number. A few pupils each year attain GCSE passes in English and mathematics. Pupils achieve accreditation in arts, employability, music technology and podcasting.
- Through the multi-disciplinary approach of all staff, pupils make particularly strong progress in their mobility and communication. They progress in walking independently or with an aid, or using a wheelchair proficiently. They learn to develop their speech or use a wide variety of aids to communicate more effectively.
- More-able pupils are not always challenged enough to make consistently strong progress. Observations, work in books of the more able pupils and an examination of

outcomes over time show that some of these pupils are not building on their prior knowledge enough.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader is well informed and has brought together a curriculum that maintains the essence of early years practice as well as specialist techniques and a multi-disciplinary approach.
- Staff are very caring and children learn to trust them. This means that children display positive behaviour and become more able to learn and attend.
- Staff provide a stimulating environment. The outside area, in particular, gives children the freedom to explore actively.
- Staff know children very well. They carry out regular assessments that are checked and moderated. They work effectively together to ensure progress toward specific agreed targets. This means children make good progress, particularly developing their independence and communication.
- Teaching in one-to-one sessions is of high quality. It is very precise. Teachers shape activities so that they can respond to the child's particular abilities and their needs. Teachers have high expectations and progress is clearly evident.
- At times, challenge is not consistent throughout different activities. Children wait too long for their turn and become bored. Adults do not always guide child-initiated activities sufficiently to ensure that they are worthwhile.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students' attitudes for learning in the sixth form are very positive. Students work well together.
- Leaders adapt the curriculum to ensure that it is interesting and engaging for students. Students make individual choices depending on their own interests. They have good opportunities to consider personal and social development, including relationships and sex education. They have opportunities to develop employability skills and take part in work experience.
- Staff offer effective support to students and their families as they move to their next destinations. Students make successful transitions to a variety of placements, including college, supported living and care homes.
- Students make good progress towards achieving their own learning goals. These are regularly tracked by leaders to ensure that no student is underachieving.
- Teaching is engaging and based on very effective relationships and knowing students well. At times, it is not challenging enough to allow students to deepen their knowledge or challenge themselves.

School details

Unique reference number	113954
Local authority	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
Inspection number	10111939

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	24
Appropriate authority	Education Board
Chair	Helen England
Headteacher	Sylvia Kerambrum
Telephone number	01202 763697
Website	vec@livability.org.uk
Email address	skerambrum@victoria.poole.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 June 2015

Information about this school

- Victoria Education Centre is operated by 'Livability', a national charity. The charity's education board oversees the work of the school, with a local school improvement board providing additional support and challenge. The headteacher is accountable to the director of education.
- The school admits pupils from a number of neighbouring local authorities and some from further afield.
- All pupils have an EHC plan associated with physical disability or complex medical conditions. Most pupils have additional learning needs. Some pupils have profound or complex learning difficulties.

- The interim headteacher took up post in January 2019.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning across different activities and year groups. Observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at the quality of pupils' work, their learning records and the school's assessment and tracking.
- Inspectors considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, Parent View, alongside the 12 responses to the free-text facility. Inspectors also considered the 53 responses to the staff questionnaire. They also took into account the school's own recent surveys.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the director of education, other senior and middle leaders, a group of staff, a group of pupils, members of the education board and the school improvement board.
- Inspectors analysed and scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and development plans, along with other documentation, including evidence from minutes, and school policies.
- An inspector made a telephone call to the LADO and to local authority SEN officers to gain the local authority's view of the provision.
- Inspectors examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils in the school. They observed medication being administered and scrutinised case files.

Inspection team

Stephen McShane, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Lovett	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sharron Escott	Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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