

# Inspection of The Lion Works School

543 Wallisdown Road, Poole, Dorset BH12 5AD

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Inspection dates: 21 to 23 November 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

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

Pupils are safe. Trusted adults listen and help. Many pupils are very positive about the difference the school is making to them. Most parents agree. Pupils learn the school's routines and expectations on arrival. Typically, pupils settle quickly after previous unsuccessful school placements.

Most pupils have a diagnosis of autism. Pupils receive a specialist curriculum. The wide range of subjects capture pupils interests well. A therapeutic curriculum is developing. However, there remain weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum. Teaching does not build securely on what pupils need to learn next. Some pupils' gaps in knowledge persist.

Pupils work hard. The more they attend, the more they learn, including how to regulate their behaviour and deal with any anxieties they have. Some pupils, however, miss a lot of school. Very recently the school has raised its expectations of what pupils can achieve by supporting families to help pupils to attend more, but it is early days.

Pupils do a lot of appealing things during what the school calls 'excellence afternoons', including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. There is a range of outdoor adventurous activities and interesting sports like archery. Staff encourage pupils to work together. For example, they are planning their first Christmas Fair.

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

There have been several changes to the leadership of the school since it has opened in 2021. At the school's first standard inspection in March 2022, the proprietor was also the headteacher. There is now a proprietor body in place and a separate headteacher. The proprietor body accurately identifies that the school is improving steadily but it is not yet good.

A new headteacher started her role in August 2023. This is the third headteacher since the school opened in January 2021. She has strong knowledge about how pupils learn and a growing understanding of the independent school standards. Leaders are working determinedly with the proprietor body to bring about the necessary improvements month-on-month.

Since the previous standard inspection in March 2022, the proprietor has strengthened the culture of safeguarding considerably. The school's safeguarding arrangements are now effective. The proprietor now ensures that all the policies required by legislation are in place.

Since the school's progress monitoring inspection in November 2022, the proprietor has strengthened its checks to hold the school accountable. For example, in April 2023, the proprietor identified that incidents of poor behaviour were high. It took swift action. Staff are now skilled in using de-escalation techniques. Leaders'

recording and analysis of behaviour are improving strongly. Incidents of poor behaviour are reducing markedly as a result. Pupils usually behave well in lessons and around school.

The school has upgraded some subject curriculums to ensure that all schemes of work meet the requirements of the independent school standards. This work is very recent. Subject content across each year is usually well sequenced. The proprietor body has secured suitable resources and equipment to deliver new aspects of the computing and technologies curriculums.

Nonetheless, there are weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum. The school's strategy to ensure all pupils read well is not fully effective. Pupils do not get enough practice to develop their fluency in reading. In some subjects, teaching is not routinely built on strong subject knowledge. Teaching can miss important steps. This makes it difficult for pupils to progress through the curriculum with confidence. Sometimes, sequences of work do not demand enough of pupils. These things slow pupils' learning down across the curriculum.

The proprietor body sets clear expectations about how staff are to use pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. However, since September 2023, school has been slow to draw up and apply these targets for a minority of pupils. These pupils do not get the immediate support they need. At times, teaching resources do not support pupils' intended learning well enough. The school is working to improve the co-production of short-term plans and targets with parents and carers, but it is early days.

In addition to GCSEs or functional skills qualifications in subjects like English, mathematics and science, pupils study for GCSEs in the humanities and a range of BTEC National Diplomas like E-sports and music production. Most recently, in the sixth form, students are benefiting from working towards qualifications that will support independent living and employment.

The curriculum promotes fundamental British values. The school is at the early stages of implementing a new personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. It teaches pupils how to keep a healthy relationship and about equality and diversity. Pupils' resilience as learners is developing. They have impartial careers guidance.

Leaders are now working well with external agencies to increase pupils' attendance. The school's outreach worker provides additional teaching, pastoral support and conducts well-being visits. This ensures pupils' safety and access to learning. Remote learning is also available. Nonetheless, pupils' absence levels remain too high.

The proprietor body uses external auditors to check the impact of its work. Recently, it has acted quickly to address non-compliance to the independent school standards, Parts 1 to 7 of the standards are now met. An up-to-date admissions register is in place. Some minor adjustments to the school's attendance information were required during the inspection. In addition, in recent times some operational

practices that the proprietor expects to be in place were not securely and consistently applied. While there are plenty of improvements happening at the school, the proprietor does not demonstrate that it consistently meets the independent school standards in full. The newness of leadership along with the number of very recent changes that have needed to be made to meet Part 1 to 7, between April and November 2023, mean that the internal capacity to continually meet the standards is not yet proven to be secure. Part 8 relating to leadership and management is not met. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- There are weaknesses in the implementation of the school's curriculum. Teaching does not build on the strong subject knowledge of what pupils know already. It misses important steps. Some resources do not support pupils' intended learning consistently well. Pupils' gaps in learning persist. The proprietor must ensure that teaching routinely meets pupils needs so that they learn consistently well across the curriculum.
- The reading curriculum is not fully effective. Staff do not adapt the reading curriculum so that it addresses pupils' gaps in knowledge securely. Pupils do not get enough practice reading and this slows their progress down. The proprietor must ensure that the reading curriculum is fully effective so that pupils read well and they learn the full curriculum proficiently.
- In the very recent past, some aspects of the independent school standards have not been met. Part 8 of the standards relating to leadership and management is not met because the internal capacity to meet the standards consistently and continually is not proven over time. The proprietor must ensure that they meet the independent school standards in full and that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

## **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>	148031
<b>DfE registration number</b>	839/6013
<b>Local authority</b>	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
<b>Inspection number</b>	10286477
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	36
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	3
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Classroom Educational Services LTD
<b>Chair</b>	Bruno Davies
<b>Headteacher</b>	Justine Collinson
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£44,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 113707
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thelionworksschool.org">www.thelionworksschool.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:hello@thelionworksschool.org">hello@thelionworksschool.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	15 to 18 March 2022

## Information about this school

- The Lion Works School is an independent special school. Most pupils have a diagnosis of autism. All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan. Two local authorities fund these places.
- The school was registered by the Department for Education (DfE) on 21 January 2021.
- The school's first standard inspection was in March 2022, when it was graded inadequate. In November 2022, The DfE commissioned a progress monitoring inspection. This reported that the school did not meet all of the independent school standards. This standard inspection also incorporated the school's second progress monitoring inspection. This inspection was brought forward due to standards being unmet at the last additional inspection.
- The school is registered for 70 pupils between the ages of 11 and 19 years.
- There have been several changes to the leadership of the school since it opened. At the school's first standard in inspection in March 2022, the proprietor was also the headteacher. There is now a proprietor body in place and a separate headteacher. A new headteacher started her role in August 2023. This is the third headteacher since the school opened in January 2021.
- 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and a range of school staff to discuss aspects of the school's work. An inspector also met with three members of the proprietor body and representatives from Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English (including reading), mathematics, science and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- An inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subjects, including physical education and computing.
- An inspector listened to pupils from key stage 3 read to an adult.
- 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 conducted a range of activities to confirm whether the independent school standards were met in full. This included health and safety checks of the premises, risk assessments, record-keeping for behaviour management, attendance and supervision during social times.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered responses to the online staff survey. An inspector spoke to a parent on the telephone.

### **The school's progress in meeting previously failed standards**

During this inspection we checked whether the school now meets the independent school standards that it was judged to have failed at its previous additional inspection in November 2022.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school does not meet all of the previously failed standards.**
- The proprietor has ensured that the procedures to safeguard pupils are now effective. The school's safeguarding arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- Information that was missing from the school's website is now compliant, for example the name and address of the proprietor body and how to contact them. The proprietor board has increased its skills and knowledge so that it can hold the school to account for meeting the independent school standards in full. Staff's knowledge of the independent school standards is now developing quickly. However, this work is recent. The proprietor has not demonstrated that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate the ability to meet the independent school standards consistently.

**The school now meets the following standards.**

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

## **Part 6. Provision of information**

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 32(1)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
  - 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate.
- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is-
  - 32(2)(b)(i) where the proprietor is an individual, the proprietor's full name, address for correspondence during both term-time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which the proprietor may be contacted.

**The school does not meet the following standards.**

## **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

## **Information about the progress monitoring inspection**

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE in order to check the standards that were not met at the previous standard inspection in March 2022 and the first progress monitoring inspection (PMI) in November 2022. This was the second PMI the school has received.
- After the school's first standard inspection in March 2022, the DfE required the school to produce an action plan. This was evaluated by Ofsted in September 2022 and found to be not acceptable. After the first PMI, the DfE required the school to produce an action plan. This was evaluated by Ofsted in March 2023 and found to be acceptable.

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

James Oldham

His Majesty's Inspector



## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

**The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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