

Winchelsea School

Address: Guernsey Road, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset, BH12 4LL

Unique reference number (URN): 113955

Inspection report: 16 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils. They model the school's behaviour policy very clearly. Pupils live up to staff's expectations. This can be seen by pupils' positive engagement at social times and their enjoyment in lessons. Classrooms are calm and orderly. Pupils show pride in their work. Pupils use their personal participation toolkits effectively on occasions when they find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. Pupils refocus and re-engage quickly as a result. Routines are well established, and transitions happen calmly and seamlessly. Bullying is rare. If it was to occur, pupils have confidence that staff would deal with it quickly and properly.

Leaders work highly effectively with pupils, families and a range of external agencies to ensure that the pupils attend school very well. Rates of attendance are consistently high. Persistent absence has decreased markedly over time. Any pupils who attend part time or through alternative provisions are under constant review. This ensures that their attendance increases markedly over time. Suspensions have decreased considerably and are now infrequent. Restrictive physical intervention is rarely used.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Leaders are highly knowledgeable about the foundations of learning that children require. Education and care practices are highly tailored to the age and stage of children's development. Children are well cared for, and safeguarding practices are followed well. The detailed induction process is instrumental in ensuring that staff get to know each child very well. Right from the start, staff provide exacting support to address the targets set out in children's education, health and care plans.

Staff use their secure subject knowledge and assessment practices to ensure that the curriculum evolves continuously. They consistently maximise opportunities for engaging children in high-quality interactions. The consistent use of visuals and prompts supports children, including those who are disadvantaged, to understand the routines. As a result, children make rapid and sustained progress from their varied starting points. The sharp focus on communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development ensures that children are very well prepared for subsequent learning pathways. Children learn phonics as soon as they are ready.

Staff form warm, trusting relationships with children. Staff work extremely closely with parents and carers to ensure that the systems put in place to aid communication are also supported at home. This significantly enhances children's and families' communication.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion sits at the school's heart. The work of leaders, staff and therapy teams has a demonstrable impact over time on the achievement and experiences of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders maintain a consistent focus on continually enhancing the provision for all pupils. The detailed induction process takes into account all aspects of pupils' lives and school experiences. Staff benefit from ongoing training and in-class support with a range of therapists. This ensures that they assess pupils' needs accurately and provide them with effective bespoke teaching strategies. Staff routinely use communication aids, sensory resources and pupils' personal plans very well to increase their participation in learning. The start of the school day is highly individualised. This ensures that pupils get the support they need to get ready for the day ahead. Regular reviews of pupils' learning and targets ensure that the curriculum is highly adapted and meets their needs well.

When pupils join after unsuccessful placements elsewhere, the school's work is highly effective in ensuring that they re-engage in learning. The school's oversight of its use of alternative provision is highly effective. There is clear oversight of the education that pupils who attend alternative provision receive. Leaders' use of additional funding ensures that the school is consistently successful in overcoming any barriers that these pupils face.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leadership and governance is highly effective. The school operates very well across all 7 sites. The significant outreach work with other schools is commendable and has notable impact. Leaders at all levels understand their roles and carry them out with precision. They are agile and responsive to quickly identify any improvement priorities. They take action and bring about improvement in all areas of the school's work.

There is a comprehensive staff professional development programme. Staff benefit from high-quality coaching and supervision. This keeps their skillset up to date. Leaders ensure that staff implement the school's expectations very effectively. Staff value the focus on their workload and wellbeing. Staff make a consistently positive contribution to supporting pupils' individual needs.

Leaders and governors build positive relationships with parents and carers, external agencies and the commissioning local authorities. Parents rate the school highly. Governors understand and fulfil their statutory duties. For example, they have oversight of the school's safeguarding practices and use of additional funding. Governors' active role in new initiatives, such as the expansion programme, has ensured that there is no dip in the effectiveness of the school at a time of rapid expansion and change. Governors know this needs to continue.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

The school's offer for pupils' personal development and wellbeing is vast. It is bespoke and highly tailored to meet the needs of pupils who attend. Leaders, staff and therapists work closely to deliver it successfully. The school has set out the key learning that pupils will secure in each curriculum pathway precisely. It is delivered through a structured and progressive curriculum that integrates personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) education, relationships and sex education and health education (RSHE), social skills and life skills. The subject content is substantial and reinforced through assemblies and enrichment opportunities such as cultural celebrations and community visits. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, gain detailed knowledge as a result. Pupils are

respectful of differences and diversity both culturally and religiously and are tolerant of one another.

Leaders maintain detailed oversight of what is taught and when. This ensures that any adaptations are carefully thought through to meet pupils' needs especially well. For example, the RSHE curriculum provides all the age-appropriate content about the self-care practices pupils need to learn when studying puberty.

Careers education is suitable. It informs pupils' future choices. Pupils experience a variety of carefully selected work experience. This prepares them very well for their next steps and life beyond school.

Pastoral support is high in quality and responsive to pupils' needs, for example when adapting the online safety curriculum to address concerns about the use of mobile phones or adjusting activities sensitively to support learning about taking turns. Pupils' ongoing support makes them feel safe and nurtured. As a result, pupils feel able to raise concerns openly. The personal development offer has a substantial impact on pupils' outcomes and their readiness for the next stage.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

The school's bespoke curriculum pathways ensure that pupils achieve ambitious outcomes from their varied starting points. This includes success in the school's 'my world curriculum'. Leaders and staff have an explicit focus to prepare pupils for adulthood and promote independence. This ensures that pupils are ready for their next stage by the time they leave.

Leaders and staff are unequivocal in their focus on developing pupils' communication. The school values every small step of progress. Carefully planned bespoke curriculums ensure that pupils meet their individualised milestones well. For example, pupils at an early stage of communicating learn to share their preferences effectively. When ready, pupils make palpable progress in their speaking, reading, writing and mathematics.

Most pupils go on to college, further education, internships or employment. Pupils achieve a range of entry level qualifications. When pupils have gaps in their knowledge or skills, bespoke support ensures that gaps close over time, including for disadvantaged pupils and those known to social care.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is broad, balanced and includes a suitable range of subjects. The school's 5 curriculum pathways ensure that pupils study curriculums that build on their varying starting points, knowledge and experience over time. Staff have secure subject knowledge in the subjects and phases they teach. Regular professional development keeps staff up to date in how to support pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teaching supports pupils' individual needs and addresses pupils' specific targets set out in their education,

health and care plans well. Generally, sequences of work enable pupils to learn and retain a wealth of subject content in English, mathematics and the school's wider curriculum offer.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the curriculum and aspects that need refinement. Leaders generally set clear expectations of how to assess what pupils know and can do. On the whole, staff use the information well to implement the curriculum, particularly within what the school calls the 'navigator' and 'enquirer' pathways. However, there are occasions when parts of teaching sequences for a minority of pupils do not demand enough of them. When this happens, pupils do not develop their knowledge consistently well and achieve highly across the curriculum.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

The sixth form has improved rapidly. Leaders have a stringent oversight of it. There is a secure and comprehensive programme of study. The curriculum is implemented well. Leaders' recent work to provide more focus on mathematics and English is proving very successful. Students now have better access to college and employment than before. Staff provide students with good-quality academic support. Students present high levels of commitment to their education and achieve well. Parents and carers are highly positive about how it supports their children to achieve and move on to further training or employment.

Pupils who have been out of school for extended time or have had unsuccessful placements elsewhere benefit tremendously from the well-thought-out curriculum. This means that these students have improved attendance and engagement in education.

There is a suitable careers programme in place. Students benefit from specialist careers advice. They have opportunities to interact with employers, for example, through visits from the police or to a mechanics workshop. Much work experience begins in school, for example running the on-site café. The school develops pupils' functional skills in English and mathematics particularly well. However, the school's work to provide a wider breadth of work experience and wider learning and accreditations is at an earlier stage.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils feel a strong sense of belonging at Winchelsea. This extends to families and staff. Everyone works in the best interest of pupils. The school's motto of 'I am, I can, I will' underpins all aspects of the school's work. Pupils have a great time there. They receive a well-rounded education. Together, pupils create meaningful and lifelong memories. The positive attitude of staff throughout the school is a distinctive feature that everyone cherishes. All achievements are celebrated. This ensures that pupils persevere and achieve great things, whether this is speaking aloud for the first time or achieving a range of qualifications. Pupils' positive experiences set them up well for what comes next. Parents recognise the life-changing work the school does.

Pupils soon learn to behave very well. They receive excellent pastoral support and the specific therapies they need. Pupils speak of the positive difference the school makes in

developing them as individuals. The school champions enhancing pupils' social skills. This gives them the confidence to make friends and look after themselves. Pupils know not to discriminate. Everyone is welcome. Pupils flourish as individuals as a result.

Staff set continuously high expectations. Pupils achieve well through the curriculum. Many go on to college placements or the wider world of work. However, occasionally, pupils do not learn the depth of knowledge they could. Leaders know this and are already making headway to address it.

Lunchtime is used well to enrich pupils' experiences beyond the academic, for example through cricket, gym membership, games clubs, music and choir. A range of day trips broaden pupils' horizons particularly well, such as visiting the coast, planning and going on the train or learning how to fish.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teaching consistently builds on what pupils know already and demands enough of them so that pupils achieve highly across the curriculum.
 - The governing body should ensure that it continues to have stringent oversight of all aspects of the school to ensure continuous improvement in this time of rapid expansion.
 - Leaders should continue to enhance the post-16 curriculum by further developing programmes that provide wider learning experiences and accreditations.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Fritz Penn-Barwell.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, associate headteacher, other leaders and staff.

Inspectors visited one unregistered alternative provision and held a telephone conversation with one unregistered alternative provision.

An inspector met with 2 members of the governing body.

An inspector met with 3 representatives of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) local authority and held conversations with the special educational needs and/or disabilities commissioning teams for BCP and Dorset.

Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

Winchelsea is a special school that caters for pupils from the ages of 4 to 19 years. It provides for pupils with moderate to complex learning needs.

All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.

The school is on 7 sites within Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

There are 5 curriculum pathways.

The school uses 4 unregistered alternative provisions.

Headteacher: Geoff Cherrill

Lead inspector:

Julie Carrington, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Malcolm Willis, Ofsted Inspector

Paul Smith, Ofsted Inspector

Gareth Morgan, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 16 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

235

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of

this phase in England.

School capacity

250

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

43.38%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

100.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

SEN unit

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty, VI - Visual Impairment, OTH - Other Difficulty/Disability, HI - Hearing Impairment, SLCN - Speech, language and Communication, ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health, MSI - Multi-Sensory Impairment, MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty, SLD - Severe Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school
2023 leavers (revised)	77%
2022 leavers (revised)	93%
2021 leavers (revised)	100%

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	9.6%
2023/24 (3 term)	9.0%
2022/23 (3 term)	9.9%

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	27.4%
2023/24 (3 term)	31.0%
2022/23 (3 term)	30.1%

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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