

Victoria Education Centre and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113954
Local authority	Poole
Inspection number	378772
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2012
Lead inspector	Mike Kell

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	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Jennings
Principal	Christina Davies
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 February 2009
School address	12 Lindsay Road Poole BH13 6AS
Telephone number	01202 763697
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Age group	4–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Mike Kell

Additional inspector

Veronica Young

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, other staff members, such as the data manager, therapists and head of student support, along with discussions with pupils. Nine lessons were observed, covering all age groups, and a further seven lessons were visited in order to focus specifically on teachers' planning. In addition, tutor time and morning welcome sessions were observed. In total, six hours were spent in classrooms. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, such as assessment data, school improvement planning, incident logs and systems for tracking pupils' behaviour. The 45 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed, as were those completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Victoria Education Centre and Sports College is a day and residential school that is operated by 'Livability', a national disability charity. This average-sized special school admits pupils from a number of local authorities, and around a quarter are residential pupils. The residential provision had its most recent social care inspection in September 2011 and did not feature in this inspection. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs associated with physical disability or complex medical conditions. Approximately half have severe learning difficulties and the remainder have moderate or profound and complex learning difficulties. Boys outnumber girls by around two to one. The very large majority of pupils are White British. Around a fifth of pupils are looked after children and a similar proportion is known to be eligible for free school meals. There are very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school had its specialist status for sport and information and communication technology reaffirmed in 2010. In the same year, it was awarded the ArtsMark Gold and an Every Child Matters Gold Quality Mark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Victoria Education Centre and Sports College is a good school. Post-16 provision is good, as is the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Pupils’ achievements are good overall and excellent in some respects, such as in acquiring communication skills and using them in different situations.
- Teaching is good. Skilled teachers and teaching assistants promote pupils’ learning well, although some features of lesson planning lack detail. The curriculum is outstanding. Opportunities presented by the school’s specialist subjects to develop pupils’ learning and personal development are exploited very well.
- The school takes excellent care of its pupils. Its coordinated approach to supporting and guiding pupils is very effective. Staff from different disciplines, such as education, nursing and therapies work very effectively together and with parents and carers.
- Pupils’ attendance is above average and their behaviour and attitudes are excellent. They mature into delightfully engaging, happy and considerate young people who celebrate their own and others’ successes cheerfully. Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. In addition to excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils show very impressive improvements in mobility, self-help skills and appreciation of the world around them as they become more independent. Very well-established links, with partners enable some higher-attaining pupils to attend lessons in mainstream schools. Pupils are prepared well for leaving school. Almost without exception, they transfer into continuing education.
- The school is well led and managed. Leaders have overseen good developments since the previous inspection, such as improving teaching and the curriculum in the post-16 department. The governing body’s influence is satisfactory, but improving. The outcomes of methodical self-evaluation are examined and acted upon to raise standards, although the analysis of pupils’ assessment information lacks precision.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that lesson planning:
 - always states clearly what teachers expect individuals or groups of pupils to learn so that their progress can be evaluated more precisely
 - identifies more specifically the opportunities for developing and reinforcing literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on pupils' achievement by:
 - refining the analysis of individuals' assessment data in order to better determine each pupil's progress compared with those of similar levels of attainment and starting points elsewhere
 - using the outcomes of the statistical analysis of pupils' progress to further accelerate the pace of learning of higher-attaining pupils, and to boost the learning of those who do not achieve as well as might be expected.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils of all ages achieve well, irrespective of the complexity of their learning difficulty. There are no significant differences in the performance of different groups, including looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Pupils achieve particularly well in subjects such as physical education and drama, which reflects the impact of the school's work in those curriculum areas for which it has received national awards. Pupils show outstanding achievement in developing communication skills. They make very good progress towards becoming independent communicators using whatever approach best suits them. In many cases, this is signs or symbols, or via information and communication technology (ICT) aids, but a high proportion of pupils communicate verbally. A minority make such very good progress that they become independent readers, with an obvious enjoyment of books. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve particularly well in areas of learning such as physical development, personal education and communication, literacy and language. Children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage prepare them well for transfer into school, and older pupils' successes put them in good stead for leaving school.

Attainment on entry is low compared to national expectations because of the severity of pupils' learning difficulties, although a very few pupils are working at a level approaching national expectations. Attainment remains low at the end of Years 6 and 11, but pupils have made such good progress towards achieving challenging end of key stage targets that the gap is reducing. Despite leaders being at an early stage of comparing individual pupils' performance with those of others of similar age and starting points elsewhere, there is emerging evidence that pupils progress at a rate that places them in a favourable position compared with the national picture. Consequently, Key Stage 4 and post-16 students are successful in a growing range of accredited examinations, and learners also succeed very well in courses such as the

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sports leadership award. Parents and carers have no doubt about the school's effectiveness, with virtually unanimous agreement that their children make good progress. One parent commented: 'My daughter is stimulated by lessons and encouraged and supported to do her best. She is proud of her achievements – as are we.' This reflects the views of very many. These achievements are not limited to school-based successes, however, as pupils also show what they have learned in local, county and national competitions and festivals for sport and the arts.

Parents' and carers' views are astute. Learners of all ages made good progress in the lessons observed. Post-16 students' success in making a chocolate cake stemmed from the good progress that they made in making choices, following a sequence, working hygienically and using kitchen utensils safely. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage made equally good progress in learning their own and others' names through sign and text. Good learning and progress were evident in other year groups too, involving lessons ranging from pupils pretending to be a puppet to identifying people who help them. Pupils always took every advantage of the opportunities provided for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, whether it be working together or thinking about a character's feelings.

Quality of teaching

A very large majority of parents and carers judge that their children are taught well, and two thirds of pupils think that teaching is always good. Their views are well founded. Teaching that is typically good, with pockets of outstanding practice, and a very well-structured curriculum enable pupils to take good advantage of a variety of learning opportunities. In all age groups, the key feature of teaching is class teams' knowledge of pupils and their communication styles, positioning, mobility and fine motor skills, assessment levels, and learning targets. Therapists provide teachers with action plans that provide a very good platform for pupils' learning, and staff make good use of the information when planning. Teachers' use of all of the information that they have available was very well demonstrated in a Key Stage 2 reading session, when meticulous planning enabled rapid learning to take place.

Outstanding relationships feature in all lessons and pupils' behaviour is managed exceptionally well. Teachers deploy class teams efficiently; well-briefed teaching assistants generally fulfil their roles effectively. Adults use questions well to check on learning and show a sensitive appreciation of when to support or prompt pupils and when to expect them to tackle activities on their own. Independent working is possible because teachers generally provide activities that have an appropriate level of challenge, informed by their knowledge of pupils' previous learning. Pupils' communication skills, including reading, and social development are promoted very well too through activities that require collaborative working, such as the pupils who worked in pairs to identify sources of income that a touring band might receive and the expenses it incurs. Staff plan effectively to use ICT as a teaching and learning tool, but planning lacks precision in other areas. Plans do not always identify exactly what individuals or groups are expected to learn, or which specific aspects of literacy and numeracy are to be targeted through the subject. Consequently, staff are not

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always in a position to judge exactly the extent of learning that has taken place.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school is a very safe, calm, orderly and caring environment in which pupils are respected and treated with dignity. They flourish in such a nurturing environment. Parents, carers and staff all agree that pupils are safe in school, and the pupils themselves confirm this, reporting that bullying is never an issue. There are no recorded instances of bullying or harassment of any kind. Other misbehaviours are recorded meticulously, as is the context of the incident and the possible triggers for the action, and then followed up as necessary. This may be through a positive behaviour management plan that is carefully monitored, reviewed and updated. The effectiveness of this procedure in improving behaviour is evident in the fact that the school has not had cause to exclude any pupil since the previous inspection.

Pupils respond very well to the staff's very high expectations. Their behaviour is outstanding and they have very positive attitudes to learning. They participate enthusiastically in all activities, whether in the classroom, in organised activities at break times or at school clubs. They are punctual and clearly enjoy being in school. Attendance has been consistently high over the past three years, with virtually no unauthorised absence. There is a constant focus throughout the day on preparing pupils to live their lives as independently as possible. This includes encouraging their awareness of potential danger and their understanding of how to act safely. For instance, pupils who use wheelchairs are motivated to manoeuvre them safely so that they can obtain the school's own 'driving licence' as this allows them to move around the school independently, and pupils are taught to recognise the danger of cyberbullying and the importance of e-safety when using computers.

Leadership and management

This is a reflective school. Leaders at all levels routinely seek ways to improve outcomes for pupils. The governing body has been through change and so its influence is currently satisfactory. However, recent initiatives, such as the introduction of more focused visits into school and a governors' action plan, indicate that the governing body is becoming increasingly involved. It worked very effectively with school leaders in ensuring that the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures are robust and applied consistently, and that all pupils are treated fairly and are able to work without fear or harassment. The school has established very productive links with parents and carers.

Leaders have engineered improvement in key development areas identified in the previous inspection. They have also developed teachers' expertise across the school through a focused approach to embedding good quality teaching that has included peer working and a targeted programme of professional development. Their influence is also evident in the improvements made to the variety of learning opportunities available. The curriculum is now outstanding because it promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well, and in

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addition, meets very effectively the learning, communication, mobility and other personal needs of learners of all ages. The range of accredited courses has increased and older students now have access to a much improved work-related learning programme that includes work experience. Furthermore, the school's excellent links with partners enables the particular curriculum needs of a few higher-attaining pupils to be met through attending courses in mainstream schools.

Leaders employ very systematic procedures to evaluate the school's work. The outcomes of such self-review have driven improvement and they are used to point the way for further change, indicating a strong capacity for ongoing improvement. Although leaders' monitoring cycle includes examining pupils' assessment information, this analysis is not as perceptive or analytical as it could be. They are at an early stage of comparing individuals' performance with that of pupils of similar age and starting points elsewhere in order to evaluate the value that the school adds to each pupil's learning, although they use national performance tables to set challenging targets. Furthermore, while leaders focus on ensuring that all pupils' learning needs are met wholly through lessons, they do not provide supplementary sessions that accelerate even more the pace of learning of the most able and which boost the achievement of those who fall short of their targets.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development, taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Victoria Education Centre and Sports College, Poole BH13
6AS**

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school and for being so kind to us. We enjoyed the time that we spent with you. Yours is a good school. We were very impressed with how well you develop into mature young people who can do things for yourselves, like steering your wheelchairs. You obviously enjoy school and always attend as often as you can. Your behaviour is excellent. The staff look after you very well and you told us that you always feel safe and are never bullied.

We agree with you that lessons are good. You learn a lot because teachers give you lots of interesting things to do. You make good progress in your work and you do really well in learning how to communicate with people. This helps to get you ready for leaving school, and we were pleased to see that nearly all of you go to college.

The people who run your school do a good job. They have made lots of changes and they have many ideas about how they can make the school even better. We have asked them to do some things as well.

- Make sure that teachers know exactly what you have learned in every lesson.
- Check very carefully how much progress you have made at the end of every year.

You can help them to make these improvements by carrying on going to school as often as you can, and by continuing to work so hard and behaving so very well.

Finally, thank you once again for welcoming us into your school and I wish each of you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kell
Lead inspector

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