

Inspection of Dorset Studio School

Kingston Maurward, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 8PX

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Paul Green. This school is part of a single-academy trust, Kingston Maurward Studio School. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Daw.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has high expectations of all pupils. The curriculum is well matched to pupils' starting points and future aspirations. Extensive work experience for those in key stage 4 is highly valued by pupils. Many pupils move on to employment and education in related areas.

Interactions between staff and pupils are warm and friendly. Pupils have trusted adults they can talk to if needed. Consequently, pupils feel safe at Dorset Studio School, and most enjoy attending.

Pupils on the key stage 4 site appreciate the workplace environment. They are mature and responsible. Both sites are calm and orderly.

The land-based curriculum inspires and motivates pupils. They enjoy applying what they have learned. Learning in English, mathematics and science is linked to the land-based curriculum where possible.

All aspects of the curriculum support pupils' wider personal development. Some pupils take on leadership roles, such as reading buddies or members of the student council. Outdoor education is integral to the curriculum. Many pupils take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

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

Pupils achieve well, particularly in the specialist land-based curriculum that the school provides. The curriculum is designed and adapted well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Consequently, they thrive and achieve good outcomes.

The curriculum builds on what pupils already know and can do. The school supports effectively pupils who arrive at the school unable to read well enough. Pupils become better readers because all aspects of the curriculum help them to do so. Those who need more support to become confident readers receive appropriate help.

Teachers' strong knowledge of the subjects they teach helps them to present information clearly. They check what pupils know and identify misunderstandings and errors. However, they do not always correct mistakes or misconceptions once they have been identified. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge that persist.

The school has high expectations of how pupils should behave. However, not all staff ensure that pupils meet these expectations. As a result, in some lessons, pupils do not learn as much as they could because they are inattentive or distracted by their peers. Bullying and discriminatory language are not tolerated by the school. Reported incidents are dealt with well.

Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. The school ensures that pupils learn about the issues that are most likely to affect them. For example, they work with the local police to raise awareness of firearm safety to support pupils who require gun licences for their land-based activity out of school. Sensitive topics are taught in an age-appropriate way by staff who know pupils well.

There is a comprehensive programme to support pupils' wider personal development. Pupils' horizons are broadened by trips, visits and guest speakers. A thorough careers programme challenges gender stereotypes and helps pupils to understand the different options open to them. For example, pupils learn about their options from university visits. They are also aware of the job roles that are most in demand in the local area. They are well prepared for their next steps in education and training.

Leaders have a clear vision for continuing to improve the school. For instance, they review the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Staff feel well supported by leaders. Many trustees have been involved with the school since it was set up. They ensure that it remains true to the vision of providing high-quality education that meets the needs of local employers as well as pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' errors and misconceptions are not always corrected promptly when they are identified. As a result, gaps in some pupils' knowledge persist. The school needs to ensure that teaching consistently enables pupils to acquire accurate knowledge of all that they study.
- Sometimes, staff do not ensure that all pupils meet the high expectations that the school has. Consequently, the behaviour of a few pupils sometimes interrupts learning. The school needs to ensure that all staff follow the school behaviour policy so that all pupils behave consistently well and can focus on their learning.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	140977
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10298023
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	340
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Daw
Principal	Paul Green
Website	www.dorsetstudioschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three registered and four unregistered provisions.
- The school is situated on two sites. Key stage 3 pupils are based at Kingston Maurward. Key stage 4 pupils are based in Dorchester.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: mathematics, science, English and the land-based curriculum.

- For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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.
- An inspector contacted some of the alternative providers used by the school.
- An inspector met with several trustees.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online surveys. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff in meetings and around the school site.
- Inspectors also visited tutor times and some reading sessions.
- Inspection activity was carried out at both of the school sites, and at the farm that is used as part of the land-based curriculum.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Simon Tong	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Butler	Ofsted Inspector

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