

Inspection of a good school: The Cornerstone Academy

Blandford Close, Hamworthy, Poole, Dorset BH15 4BQ

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 October 2022

Outcome

The Cornerstone Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending school. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils consistently meet these expectations. The absence of low-level disruption enables pupils to learn in a calm and purposeful environment.

Pupils are safe. They feel they can speak to a member of staff if they are worried. Pupils learn about how to keep safe off and online. On the rare occasions that bullying occurs, leaders deal with it swiftly and effectively.

Pupils participate in a purposeful character development programme. They value the opportunity to earn different coloured badges for demonstrating the school's six core values. Pupils support others to develop their character too.

Pupils learn how to be active citizens. For example, they participate in local youth democratic processes. Leaders listen to pupils' views when making changes at the school. For instance, in the new behaviour policy, pupils helped choose the words of chance, choice and consequence.

Pupils are proud of their learning and talk enthusiastically about it. They say that teachers help them to do their best. However, pupils do not learn to discuss subject matter as well as they could.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. The broad curriculum at key stage 3 prepares pupils well for future learning. At key stage 4, increasing numbers of pupils are studying the suite of subjects known as the English Baccalaureate. The curriculum is well planned and sequenced. As a result, pupils gain detailed knowledge incrementally. This is reflected in the high-quality work they produce.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders identify how teaching should be adapted, and they check the impact of adaptations to the curriculum. Consequently, teaching meets the needs of pupils with SEND.

Leaders ensure there is a consistent approach to teaching across all subjects. Teachers present subject knowledge clearly and check pupils' understanding systematically. This means teachers quickly identify pupils' misconceptions and correct them. Teachers use assessment to help pupils embed and use knowledge fluently. However, teaching does not always promote pupil discussion about subject content. This means pupils have limited opportunity to articulate their learning.

Leaders have raised their expectations of pupils' literacy skills. Leaders identify pupils who need help with their fluency and confidence in reading. Leaders have put a programme in place to support these pupils. However, the curriculum for pupils in the early stages of reading does not develop pupils' fluency and accuracy as effectively as it could. There is not a sharp focus on ensuring that pupils gain the necessary phonics knowledge.

The school's personal development programme is coherently planned. Leaders seek pupils' views to develop an age-appropriate personal, social and health education curriculum. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of healthy relationships. Pupils learn about different forms of spirituality and beliefs. They understand the importance of respecting people from different backgrounds to their own.

Pupils receive effective careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). This helps them make informed choices about their potential next steps. Pupils have good-quality encounters with the world of work, and with post-16 and post-18 education and training providers. Leaders draw on local contextual information to tailor the CEIAG programme to local priorities. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

Leaders provide professional development to enhance teachers' subject and pedagogical knowledge. Teachers speak positively of the support, encouragement and challenge they receive. Leaders manage staff workload effectively. They listen to staff and avoid unnecessary burdens. Staff say that leaders are considerate of well-being.

Trustees and local governors have a clear vision for the school. They are ambitious for the quality of education that pupils receive. Local governors provide the right support and challenge to school leaders, as do trust leaders. Local governors and trustees understand their respective roles and carry them out effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take judicious action to keep children safe. They make referrals to local safeguarding partners and collaborate with external agencies. Leaders challenge safeguarding partners if children do not receive timely help.

Leaders train staff so they know when to raise concerns about children's safety and welfare. Leaders have raised awareness among staff and pupils about the dangers of sexual harassment, sexual abuse and sexual violence. There are suitable policies in place to tackle these issues when they occur.

Leaders make effective arrangements for the safe recruitment of adults working in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum for pupils in the early stages of reading is not sharply focused on phonics knowledge. This means pupils in the early stages of reading do not learn to read accurately and fluently as quickly as they could. Leaders should ensure that there is an effective reading curriculum to prepare these pupils for future learning.
- Teaching does not always promote appropriate discussion. As a result, pupils do not learn to debate and discuss subject content and issues as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that teaching provides opportunity for appropriate discussion.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Carter Community School, to be good in January 2017.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139258
Local authority	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
Inspection number	10226895
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	600
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yasmine Bevan
Principal	Sam Davidson
Website	www.cornerstoneacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 January 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school changed its name in April 2021. Previously, it was called the Carter Community School.
- The school is part of the United Learning multi-academy trust.
- The school uses one Ofsted-registered alternative provision.
- There is a greater proportion of pupils with SEND and pupils who have an education, health and care plan than is seen nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above national average.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held discussions with the principal, members of the senior leadership team, curriculum leaders, the chair of trustees, members of the local governing body and the multi-academy trust's regional director.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector visited a sample of lessons in other subjects on day two of the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and examined the school's safeguarding records. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- The lead inspector spoke to the alternative provider used by the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

James Oldham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alun Williams

Ofsted Inspector

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