

Inspection of The Swanage School

High Street, Swanage, Dorset BH19 2PH

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Jennifer Maraspin. This school is part of Education Swanage Limited. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Timothy Marcus.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at The Swanage School belong to a strong community in which staff know them well. Positive relationships between staff and pupils underpin life at the school. This means that pupils have positive attitudes towards school and behave well. Bullying is extremely rare because there is a culture of tolerance and kindness. Pupils are empathetic and learn how to take responsibility for their actions. They are supportive of one another and proud of their unique school.

Pupils learn from an innovative curriculum. The school ensures that pupils are prepared for their futures. Pupils undertake meaningful projects. These explore national and global challenges. The school also maintains strong links with its local community.

Pupils' wider experiences are central to the school's ethos. A range of national and international trips are offered, including visits to Iceland and Switzerland, as well as a vast number of clubs and activities. Nearly all pupils take part in at least one extra-curricular club, from robotics, Formula 24 racing and astronomy, to a wide range of sports and outdoor education opportunities. Many pupils take part in the annual school musical theatre performance on a professional stage.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious and carefully planned. Most subject curriculums are fully developed, although some aspects of curriculum development are in their early stages. Where the curriculum is developed well, pupils build knowledge sequentially. Alongside subject-specific knowledge and skills, pupils learn how to work together and answer questions linked to personal, local and global challenges. The school takes a distinctive approach to its curriculum. While the full suite of subjects in the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) is offered to pupils, many choose to take other academically ambitious options.

Teaching ensures that pupils deepen their understanding of each subject. Teachers question pupils skilfully to ensure they understand before they teach new content. This means that work is suitably demanding for pupils. Teaching ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. As a result, pupils mostly achieve well.

There is a culture of reading in the school. Many pupils say they read more since joining the school. Struggling readers are supported to catch up, although some of this work is in its early stages. As a result, the support some pupils receive is not precisely matched to their needs. Pupils with SEND are accurately identified. Teachers know and understand these pupils' needs well. They adapt learning, so these pupils learn effectively alongside their peers.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud to attend. The school maintains a sharp focus on attendance, but too many pupils are persistently absent. The school

works closely with families and has supported some pupils to attend more regularly. When pupils do not meet the school's high expectations, staff ensure they understand the consequences of their actions. Repeated poor behaviour is very rare. Pupils show high levels of respect towards one another.

Pupils value the large number of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. For example, all pupils in Year 9 take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The school has many local, national and international links, providing pupils with an exceptional range of opportunities. The school ensures that any barriers to participation are removed, including for disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils remember important information about how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They enjoy opportunities to discuss and debate ideas. Careers education and guidance is prioritised. There is a strong focus on digital literacy. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on and use their skills as they move through the school. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leaders at the school ensure that teachers deliver the planned curriculum effectively. They engage with staff positively, so they feel happy and proud to work at the school. There is a strong moral imperative to welcome all pupils. Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They challenge leaders appropriately to drive improvements where they are needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few curriculum areas are in the early stages of development. As a result, the school has not yet evaluated the effectiveness of its implementation. The school must ensure that staff are fully supported to enact its plans, so that pupils learn consistently well across the curriculum.
- The school's work to support struggling readers is developing. The school does not have a clear strategy in place for diagnosing precisely what kind of support pupils need. As a result, a few pupils do not gain the phonics knowledge and language comprehension necessary to read well. The school must ensure there is a coherent plan in place, so all pupils get precisely the right support.

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	139376
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10298013
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	351
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Timothy Marcus
Headteacher	Jennifer Maraspin
Website	www.theswanageschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- 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 school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, humanities and physical education. 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.

- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about project-based learning.
- The lead inspector analysed responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors also considered the views of pupils and staff in Ofsted's online surveys.
- Inspectors also spoke with groups of pupils, as well as talking to them in lessons and during social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector: 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 also met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and discussed how pupils with SEND are identified and supported.
- An inspector met with staff who oversee the personal development and behaviour of pupils.
- The lead inspector met with members of the board of trustees.

Inspection team

Victoria Griffin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

John Weeds

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Mike Thomas

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