

Inspection of Sheiling School

Horton Road, Ashley, Ringwood, Hampshire BH24 2EB

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 November 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Sheiling School gives pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) the chance to shine. Many pupils have had previously unsuccessful educational experiences. The school is nestled within impressive rural grounds, providing a tranquil backdrop. Inside the classrooms and around the school, the atmosphere is equally serene. Pupils love to learn and do so with increasingly high levels of engagement. Pupils are safe.

Pupils behave extremely well. Adults support pupils' behaviour effectively. They notice subtle changes and analyse them for any emerging trends or patterns, acting on their findings swiftly. Bullying does not occur.

Pupils of all ages enjoy high-quality personal development opportunities. This helps to prepare them for adulthood. Pupils learn the key knowledge and skills they need. For example, knowing what to expect when visiting a doctor.

Leaders' high expectations are realised through the effective teaching of the school's ambitious curriculum. They provide pupils with rich academic and pastoral opportunities. The teaching of reading is a particular strength. This helps pupils to understand and access the wider world around them.

The overwhelming majority of parents value the school. Many commented on how the school has transformed the lives of their children.

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

Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met in full. Trustees, senior leaders and curriculum leaders fulfil their roles and responsibilities well. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have continued to provide high-quality training for staff. Phonics training has been particularly effective. This has been instrumental in helping embed the new approach to teaching pupils how to read. Staff feel valued by leaders. They are positive about how well leaders consider their workload and well-being. Senior leaders are supporting a new group of leaders to take on curriculum responsibilities. This work is still in its early stages.

Pupils access the school's curriculum well. Leaders, staff and pupils use a range of communication strategies such as sign language and symbols. These strategies help leaders achieve their accessibility aims. Leaders' actions comply with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

All pupils who attend Sheiling School have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Staff know pupils' needs well. They provide pupils with the support they need to be successful. Leaders ensure the school's curriculum is broad and varied. Staff review the provision and pupils' targets frequently. This ensures the support they provide continues to be relevant and challenging. Adults' support for pupils is effective in

helping pupils to engage with their learning. However, there are small pockets of inconsistencies where this support is less strong.

Leaders have established a culture of high expectations. Curriculum plans build toward clear milestones, considering what pupils already know. Pupils remember previous learning well and can share their knowledge verbally or non-verbally. Pupils build their independence well, for example knowing when to put on an apron and goggles during woodwork without adults prompting them.

Leaders' high expectations for pupils are not limited to academic progress. They maintain a strong focus on ensuring all pupils are well prepared for adulthood. This work underpins the school's curriculum. Students in the sixth form learn important life skills such as writing a CV, applying for a job and completing an interview. This helps them to prepare for their next transition, such as moving to post-19 education.

Phonics and reading are a strength of the school. Leaders' determination that pupils of all ages learn to read is paying off. The whole school, including in the sixth form, follow the phonics programme consistently. Pupils love learning phonics. They are now understanding letters and the sounds they make, where before they were not able to. Pupils practise reading with books that contain the sounds they know. This helps them to read with greater fluency. This is particularly empowering for older students, helping them to unlock opportunities for life after school.

Pupils behave and attend extremely well. They value one another. Pupils are taught the importance of friendships and enjoy sharing what they like about their peers. For example, they recognised how certain friends make them happy or laugh. Pupils are polite and courteous. They are keen to share their achievements and thoughts.

Pupils are confident learners. They establish warm, trusting relationships with adults. This helps them to feel safe to take risks. Staff plan these risks carefully, supporting pupils' character development well. For example, a pupil enjoyed the thrill of reading aloud in front of peers, despite nerves and anxiety.

The leaders' work to support pupils' personal development is exemplary. Leaders expose pupils to the knowledge that they will need to lead safe and healthy lives. A comprehensive relationships and sex education curriculum helps pupils to learn key knowledge. For example, they are taught when it is appropriate to show a doctor parts of their body and that it is inappropriate to show these to a stranger. Pupils are taught about maintaining a healthy diet and the importance of exercise. Older pupils benefit from a local gym membership. To help keep pupils safe, staff teach them the difference between friends and strangers. Pupils learn how this influences their behaviours and interactions.

Pupils learn about different religions and cultures. They celebrate the rich diversity that exists across the school community and beyond. Pupils learn about different genders and sexualities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Leaders are clear that helping pupils learn about difference is important in helping them to show respect and tolerance toward others, one of the fundamental British values.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders only appoint adults who are suitable to work with children. Leaders provide an in-depth induction for newly appointed staff, so that they know the school's safeguarding procedures well.

Staff fulfil their responsibilities in line with the school's safeguarding policy. Staff know pupils with SEND have an increased vulnerability to risk of harm, particularly those who cannot communicate verbally. Staff use their good knowledge of pupils to notice potential signs of concern. They share any concerns with leaders in a timely manner. Leaders analyse this information to identify any patterns, passing concerns on to external agencies when appropriate.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- There are some pockets of inconsistency in the support that adults provide for pupils. Where this occurs, pupils do not access learning as successfully as others. Through training and monitoring, leaders need to ensure that staff provide consistently strong quality of support for pupils.
- Leadership of the school is generally strong. Senior leaders recognise that some middle leaders are in the early days of developing the expertise that they need to lead a curriculum subject. Senior leaders need to continue their work on developing these aspiring leaders so that they fulfil their new leadership responsibilities well.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	113952
DfE registration number	838/6004
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10201942
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Sheiling Special Education Trust
Chair	Jeremy Morris
Headteacher	Andy Walters
Annual fees (day pupils)	£55,627
Telephone number	01425 477488
Website	www.thesheilingringwood.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@thesheilingringwood.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 November 2017

Information about this school

- The Sheiling School is an independent special school catering for pupils with SEND. The school's educational approach is inspired by Rudolf Steiner.
- Sheiling School is part of the Sheiling Special Education Trust.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils have moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties. They are placed in the school by a wide range of local authorities.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place on 28 to 30 November 2017. An emergency inspection also took place on 3 May 2018.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, 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 met with trustees and senior leaders to discuss the independent school standards and how they ensure that these are met in full. This evidence contributed towards meeting part 8 of the independent school standards.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders responsible for: supporting pupils' personal development, pupils' attendance, careers guidance and supporting pupils' behaviour. They also met with those responsible for overseeing part 3 of the independent school standards, considering associated policies, registers and documents.
- The lead inspector met with the designated lead and one of the deputy leaders for safeguarding to evaluate the school's safeguarding procedures. He also checked the school's single central record and some personnel files. This evidence contributed towards meeting part 4 of the independent school standards.

- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss how well the school supports pupils' wide-ranging needs. They considered how pupils' EHC plans inform the education and pastoral provision that the school offers to pupils.
- The lead inspector carried out a premises and site walk to consider part 5 of the independent school standards. He also scrutinised the school's website and policies and documents to determine how well the school meets parts 6 and 7 of the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to the staff or pupil survey. However, inspectors spoke with staff and communicated with pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Nathan Kemp, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Richard Vaughan

Ofsted Inspector

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