

Inspection of a good school: The Sir John Colfox Academy

Ridgeway, Bridport, Dorset DT6 3DT

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 September 2023

Outcome

The Sir John Colfox Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Adam Shelley. This school is part of Initio Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Elizabeth West, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Kingston.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Sir John Colfox value the strong relationships they have with adults in the school. They feel safe and know that if bullying happens, staff will resolve it. Pupils talk proudly about the range of extra-curricular opportunities available to them. The house events and competitions are particularly popular. Staff ensure that all pupils take part. They encourage pupils to try something new. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, enjoy learning from visiting speakers.

In most subjects, pupils are learning from a well-planned curriculum. The school has ensured that what pupils learn is more than just preparation for examinations. Recent changes to the curriculum reflect the school's ambition for its pupils to achieve more highly. Pupils learn about the wider world and other cultures. Pupils at the school enjoy reading and talk enthusiastically about books they have read.

Most pupils behave very well. They are polite and attentive. A small number of pupils do not yet meet the school's expectations. The school is taking effective action to ensure all pupils can learn in calm and orderly classrooms. Pupils are confident that poor behaviour is addressed.

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

In most subject areas, pupils learn from a curriculum which has been thoughtfully sequenced. Pupils build on what they have learned previously. When they talk about their work, they make links between prior and current learning. Pupils remember important information. Teachers explain content clearly and break down knowledge into small steps. This means that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn effectively. The school has ensured that gaps in learning are identified and filled. The school's recent work to develop the curriculum is not yet

reflected in published outcomes. However, current pupils are now benefiting from the improved curriculum.

The school is ambitious for its pupils. For example, nearly all pupils are expected to learn a modern foreign language in key stage 4. Most pupils study the English Baccalaureate subjects.

Sometimes, expectations of what pupils can learn and their attitudes towards learning are not high enough. This is also reflected in the quality of pupils' work, including in the sixth form.

The school has prioritised reading. All pupils read independently as part of the tutor programme. Pupils in key stage 3 enjoy and value additional reading time. Adults in the school guide pupils to books they might enjoy, which link to what they are learning. Pupils who are at the early stages of reading are supported to catch up with expert help.

Pupils with SEND are accurately identified and teachers know them well. The school works effectively with these pupils. A number of parents are very pleased with the support they have received. The school is addressing the negative feedback it has received from a small number of parents.

There have been recent changes to the behaviour policy. The school has responded well to increased challenges following the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, it has improved the range of pastoral care available to pupils and supported teachers to manage behaviour effectively. This has had a positive impact on most pupils. However, the new policy is not yet applied consistently well by all staff. This means learning is sometimes disrupted.

The school prides itself on the range of opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences beyond the classroom. Many pupils enjoy sports clubs and competitions. Links with the local community are strong. Students in the sixth form all take part in 'give back' time. They support younger pupils and volunteer their time in local organisations. The school ensures pupils learn about other cultures. As a result, pupils describe their school as tolerant and respectful.

Pupils are well prepared for the future through the careers programme. The school works closely with local employers and ensures pupils in all year groups are prepared for the world of work. Pupils are well informed about the range of opportunities available to them. Pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged receive additional support when needed.

Leaders engage positively with staff. The school has recently joined a new trust and the transition has been smooth. The trust is effectively supporting the school to ensure that its systems and processes improve outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The new behaviour policy is not always implemented effectively by all staff. As a result, a small number of pupils continue to disrupt lessons. The school and the trust must ensure they support all staff to apply the policy consistently and fairly, so all pupils can learn effectively.
- High expectations of pupils are not shared by all staff. As a result, attitudes towards learning and the quality of pupils' work are not consistently high. The school and the trust should provide clarity to staff about the standards they expect from pupils.

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 school to be good in March 2018.

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	141735
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10298031
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	845
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	89
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Kingston
CEO of the trust	Elizabeth West
Headteacher	Mr Adam Shelley
Website	http://www.colfox.org
Dates of previous inspection	28 February and 1 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school was part of The Minerva Learning Trust until February 2023, when it joined with Wimborne Academy Trust and became Initio Learning Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision and one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school shares its sixth form provision with another local school, Beaminster School.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- On the first day, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education. As part of this, they held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. They also talked to pupils about their learning and looked at work they had completed.
- The lead inspector also visited a sample of additional lessons on the second day of the inspection and looked at pupils' work.
- The lead inspector analysed responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the views of pupils and staff in Ofsted's online surveys.
- 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.
- The lead inspector also met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and discussed how pupils with SEND are identified and supported.
- The lead inspector met with staff who oversee the personal development and behaviour of pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing committee and one trustee.
- The lead inspector also met with one director and the chief executive of Initio Learning Trust.

Inspection team

Victoria Griffin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lorraine Heath

Ofsted Inspector

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