

Inspection of Vermont School

Vermont Close, Off Winchester Road, Southampton, Hampshire SO16 7LT

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 June 2025
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

All pupils at this school have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many have experienced a disrupted educational experience previously. They benefit from the kindness and care that the school staff show them. Pupils build positive relationships with staff who they consider to be their trusted adults. There are warm greetings exchanged between pupils and staff at the start of the school day.

The nurture that pupils receive is not matched by the quality of education that is on offer. The school does not have high enough expectations of what pupils should know and be able to do. The curriculum does not enable them to build their knowledge and skills. This means that pupils are not prepared for their next educational steps.

Pupils understand the importance of showing respect and considering the feelings of others. They respond to reminders to be polite and moderate their language. They generally behave well in lessons and, when needed, they are supported to recognise their emotions and regulate their behaviour.

Pupils enjoy their lunchtime clubs where they can choose from a range of activities. They value playing games with their friends and observing nature. The card trading club is incredibly popular. Pupils are supported well in their interactions with each other during this activity. Pupils benefit from the use of local amenities such as a nearby swimming pool where they enjoy water confidence sessions.

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

The governing body does not understand or fulfil its statutory responsibilities. It does not gather the information that it needs to appropriately challenge and support school leaders. This means that governors do not have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and what needs to improve. In addition, they do not ensure that information on the school's website contains all that it should, nor do governors ensure that policies and procedures are followed. This includes the governing body's responses to complaints from parents and carers.

In most subjects, the curriculum lacks ambition and structure. This results in a lack of clarity about what pupils need to learn and when subject content will be taught. Consequently, pupils do not build their knowledge and skills over time. They have gaps in their learning and their misconceptions are not consistently addressed.

In many subjects, lessons consist of activities which do not form part of a sequenced learning journey. This means that pupils' prior learning is not considered well enough or built on securely over time. Pupils' access to appropriate resources is limited and there is variability in how well staff support pupils with their learning. In many instances, the same lesson is delivered, irrespective of pupils' developmental and learning needs. In addition, in most subjects, there are not effective assessment procedures and strategies. As a result, the school does not have a clear picture of how well pupils are learning.

The school does not prioritise the teaching of reading. Most staff have been trained in teaching the school's phonics scheme. However, they do not all have appropriate resources to support pupils to build their phonics knowledge systematically. Pupils do not have ready access to decodable reading books, and they are not given time to practise reading. Across the curriculum, pupils struggle to understand and use reading materials. This hampers their learning further.

The school has improved aspects of its behaviour management systems, which were identified as a weakness at the last inspection. There is a culture of help and support, which incorporates consideration of pupils' emotional and well-being needs. The number of suspensions from school has reduced. There are fewer violent incidents and a reduced need for physical intervention by staff. However, the school's behaviour systems are not consistently understood and applied by staff. This means that some pupils do not receive the support that they need.

A significant number of pupils do not attend school often enough. The school has a secure oversight of the reasons behind pupils' absence, and it offers appropriate support to families. However, much of this work is in its earliest stages. This means that some pupils continue to have high rates of persistent absence.

Pupils benefit from opportunities to contribute to school life. They enjoy their jobs in the school's assemblies where there are shared celebrations of pupils' achievements. The student council takes its responsibilities seriously in the way that it looks after the school site and reminds others to do the same. Pupils have an understanding about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through nutrition and exercise. However, pupils' wider experiences are limited. They do not currently have opportunities to extend their learning beyond the curriculum through school trips and interactions with the community.

Since the last inspection, there has been significant staff turnover. This presents the school with challenges in terms of staff training and professional development. The school is beginning to gain a more accurate understanding of its weaknesses. However, it has not been successful in bringing about sustained improvements to the quality of pupils' education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The governing body does not provide effective oversight, support or challenge to the school to ensure that pupils receive a quality education. This means that pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Governors must make sure that they have the

knowledge and information that they need to hold the school to account for the quality of education that it provides, so that pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

- Governors do not fulfil their statutory obligations. This means that stakeholders do not have access to the information they should through the school's policies and procedures. The governing body should ensure that it understands and implements its statutory duties fully.
- The school's curriculum lacks structure and ambition. The teaching of reading lacks a systematic approach. This means that pupils are not achieving as well as they should across a range of subjects, including reading. The school must ensure that it designs an ambitious and clearly sequenced curriculum. It should also ensure that staff receive the support that they need to implement the curriculum effectively, therefore ensuring pupils accumulate the knowledge and skills that they should.
- In most subjects, the school does not have effective assessment systems. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are not addressed. The school should ensure that assessment procedures are established and used to provide information about how well pupils are learning and what they need to learn next.
- The systems for managing pupils' behaviour are not followed consistently well. This means that some pupils do not know what is expected of them or they do not receive the support that they need to manage their own behaviour. The school should ensure that all staff are equipped to manage pupils' behaviour in a consistent way, in line with school procedures.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

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	116625
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10356665
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sam Chapman
Headteacher	Matthew McLoughlin-Parker
Website	www.vermontschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 June 2024, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Vermont School is a special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils at the school have education, health and care plans.
- The school is a member of Aspire Community Trust, a cooperative trust in Southampton.
- The school's headteacher was not available during the inspection. The school currently has an interim headteacher, in the absence of the substantive headteacher.
- The school currently uses four unregistered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the interim headteacher and senior school leaders as well as representatives from the governing body, the foundation trust and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, humanities and personal, social, health and economic 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.
- The inspectors also visited other lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work across different subjects.
- 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 inspectors analysed responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and spoke to staff about their views of the school. There were no responses to the Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- The inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also spoke to parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Kate Fripp, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lucy English

His Majesty's Inspector

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