

Mountjoy School Self-evaluation Framework



MOUNTJOY SCHOOL
SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION
2026

CONTEXT

Mountjoy School caters for children aged between 4 and 19 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) We have a Post 16 and early years (EYFS) department. We currently have 112 pupils on roll and a number of local children waiting for spaces. All pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan. Mountjoy is designated for children with Severe Learning Difficulties (LD) and Profound and Multiple LD, and there are around 10% of children/young people who have Moderate LD, usually with additional complexity such as SEMH needs or physical disability. Around 60% have Autism.

39% of our pupils are on Free School Meals and we have several Post LAC children and Children in Need. Progress of these vulnerable groups is closely monitored; there is no discrepancy between their attainment and others, due to the highly personalised offer. All pupils have MAPs, individual support plans for targets identified in their EHCPs.

We are located in rural West Dorset and have a wide catchment from Dorset, and Somerset and Devon. We are an active member of TADSS, the Teaching Alliance of Dorset Special Schools and benefit from collaborating with our colleagues across Dorset as well as leading on Therapeutic Thinking across the 6 schools. Therapeutic Thinking is the basis of our behaviour policy which focuses on understanding motivations for behaviours and enabling children to learn the skills to self-regulate. It is embedded into our daily practice and as a result, despite a very complex cohort, most children are ready to learn and engaged and there is a calm and purposeful environment. We are also involved in national initiatives having a Maths Leader for the SW, and our English Lead who has helped to develop the specialist strand of Read Write Inc. We offer outreach/ in-reach to mainstream schools in the area and our Head Teacher is on the Dorset Education Board, representing the special schools and helping to drive forward inclusive practices across Dorset.

The Head Teacher who has been in post since June 2020, is 0.8 fte and is supported by a part-time Head/Deputy Head who oversees EYFS and Primary, and a full time Assistant Head who oversees secondary and Post 16 provision. We have 6 TLR posts in EYFS, Post 16, Multi-Sensory Learning and Mental Health and also covering English and maths. Our teachers/TAs are engaged in continuous professional development and are highly skilled.

We have a strong focus on preparation for the next stage of education or employment and life skills. This includes having an emphasis on English including communication, maths and PSHE, which takes up a large percentage of our morning teaching in school, adapted to learning need. Our teaching and learning harnesses the benefits of nature/outside and we have beach and forest school areas within school grounds. As there is an emphasis on preparation for adulthood, we work on independence skills and self-regulation and do many activities within the community across all age groups.

We have undergone an unprecedented period of growth in the last 5 years, partly due to the enormous demand for special school places in Dorset and the popularity of Mountjoy with parents and carers. The school was built for 65 pupils; we have reorganised classes, repurposed rooms in the building and added a modular Key Stage 4, to accommodate this expansion. We have excellent facilities, such as our hydrotherapy pool, sensory and soft room and have well-used outside areas with sensory, play and learning equipment. However, we are waiting for a new secondary build due to start imminently.

In order to enable children to maximise learning, therapy is interwoven into the school day and usually delivered by our expert team of TAs under the guidance of a therapist. We have a Speech and Language Therapist (15 hours/week) who works with pupils and families, and writes programmes for staff to deliver. We have an Occupational Therapist 4 hours/week, plus training time who supports sensory processing who is able to write programmes to be delivered in school. This OT is helping us to fully develop our work on developmental play. We also have a school counsellor whose focus is working directly with pupils and who provides supervision for staff. We have a music therapist to support the emotional wellbeing of pupils. Therapists also deliver staff training to build capacity. We work closely with NHS services including CAMHS ID, a multidisciplinary team to support challenging behaviours. We have two part-time family advisers, who help with barriers to learning by supporting parents/carers. In house we run MOVE and Rebound Therapy to support physical development. We received a national award from the Council for Disabled Children 'Partnership for Inclusion' in 2026.

We emphasise pupil and staff well-being and have created a culture of collaboration and shared ownership; we are proud to have gained Right Respecting Schools Gold Award and continue to prioritise emotional and physical wellbeing. Our parents are an enormous source of support and we keep them informed daily so that they can be equal partners in their child's education. School events, such as fetes, shows, summer Shakespeare and Christmas production, parent meetings, coffee mornings and our family picnic are well attended. Staff members across all roles are highly invested and we live by our values of PASSION, RESPECT, OPTIMISM, UNDERSTANDING and DETERMINATION. We Are all incredibly proud of the Mountjoy School community.

Key demographic information March 2026 (Based on needs ranked 1 & 2)			
Total number of pupils on roll	112	Pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan	100%
Girls on roll	26%	SLCN	80%
Boys on roll	74%	ASD	61%
PMLD	1%	SEMH	5%
SLD	42%	HI	1%
MLD	11%	VI	1%
PD	0%		
Pupils whose first language is not English	6% (7)	Pupils eligible for free school meals at any time during the past 6 years	39% (43)
Progress against previous inspection			
Areas to improve		Progress	
<p>1) “Some leaders have not had the opportunity to monitor the subjects they lead. This means they do not know if pupils are acquiring the knowledge and skills they need. Leaders need to ensure that subject leaders are able to check the quality of provision to assure themselves pupils are learning the intended curriculum.”</p>		<p>Prior to previous Ofsted, staffing levels had been lower than usual, due to the difficulties with COVID and following winter flu, meaning that staff needed to cover lessons, due to us not reducing numbers of pupils in school (all parents were able to send their children in as normal).</p> <p>This was addressed by a timetable of protected time-off timetable for subject leaders.</p> <p>During this period Subject Leaders were able to rewrite the curriculum to better meet the needs of all pupils:</p> <p>Ofsted '22: “Leaders have crafted an ambitious and well-planned curriculum. It is bespoke to the needs of the pupil.</p> <p>Pupils follow clear pathways from Reception Year to post-16. Leaders ensure pupils receive independent careers guidance from Year 8. This ensures pupils are well prepared for their next steps.”</p>	
PRIORITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue to ensure our pupils understand online safety and the risks and benefits of AI. • To access further support for Therapeutic Interventions through creative use of finances • To align our strong progress in reading to writing skills, which do not currently correlate. • To grow expertise in Developmental Play in order to address the needs of our very complex pupils to have a strong foundation on which to learn. • To improve attendance by increasing face-to-face parental engagement by offering family meet-ups and training in venues other than at school. • To support recruitment of excellent special needs teachers, explore routes into teaching for experienced and outstanding Teaching Assistants. • To set up a bespoke training program for new staff in SEN EYFS, which could be used county-wide. • To investigate merging parts MSC/MOVE and current Post 16 curriculums to develop curriculum to suit needs of incoming cohort • . 		

SAFEGUARDING – MET

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring shows we have effective systems in place to report concerns • Regular training ensures that staff understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. This contributes to a strong culture of vigilance • Our child protection policy is clear, accessible and frequently reviewed, to make sure that we're delivering comprehensive safeguarding and everyone understands their roles • We have effective multi-agency working procedures in place, and we collaborate frequently with our local safeguarding partners • Annual audit of safeguarding is strong
Actions from previous year: Update low level concern policy	Impact of actions: Greater clarity that ALL minor concerns are logged
Areas for development	Continue to refine the teaching and learning of online safety and AI to pre-verbal pupils: how do we know they can apply learning?
Next steps	Ongoing CPD in online safety and AI.

INCLUSION – STRONG STANDARD

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and leadership identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately, including any emerging or changing needs. All pupils, across all age groups and stages are considered on an individual basis to ensure they are following the best possible curriculum and that any barriers to learning are lifted, so that they have enhanced opportunities and experiences so that they are prepared to lead a fulfilled adult life. Evaluation of our therapeutic practice shows that the impact is significant. • Any incidents of bullying, real or perceived, are dealt with immediately in conjunction with families to ensure the school is a safe place. • Pupil Premium strategy is evidence-based and is used effectively and its impact is frequently monitored as part of our drive to remove any disadvantage. Progress and assessment data, and onwards destination data for pupils who are disadvantaged, show that strategies to support these groups are effective as there is no noticeable difference between those with and without additional disadvantage. • Leaders have clarity around admissions, ensuring that places are allocated to the pupils with the most complex needs and/or disadvantage. They take an active role in the wider system, promoting inclusion through outreach, Dorset education Board and TADSS. • Pupils with the highest levels of dysregulation have a highly bespoke, therapeutic offer, which enables them to access learning, which is created through. • Families are well-supported through our family workers and collaboration with Social Care to ensure best possible outcomes.
------------------	--

<p>Actions from previous year: Creation of Speech and Language Pathways to increase the amount of development for pre-verbal pupils.</p>	<p>Impact of actions: Staff more confident in knowing small next steps to ensure progress continues in between Sp&LT Reviews, when targets are met before the end of a half term, leading to greater progress.</p>
<p>Areas for development</p>	<p>To access further support for Therapeutic Interventions through careful use of finances.</p>
<p>Next steps</p>	<p>Further analysis of impact of Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Music Therapy, Counselling, Emotional Support, Rebound Therapy and MOVE to target finances towards the areas which yield the greatest impact on well-being and progress.</p>

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING – STRONG STANDARD

<p>Strengths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders make astute decisions about how the curriculum and teaching should adapt and evolve, based on their evidence and insight about how well pupils have learned what was intended. The curriculum has adapted according to the changing needs of pupils and is scrutinized at least annually. The addition of Developmental Play has enabled some pupils with very complex Autism to engage. This work has been in collaboration with Bournemouth Health University (BHU) and is being rolled out to other schools in Dorset. Learning walks and monitoring visits consistently see pupils engaged in learning. • Staff and leadership identify pupils’ learning levels quickly and accurately, to be responsive to emerging or changing needs. All pupils, across the ability / diversity range are considered on an individual basis to ensure they are following the best possible curriculum and that any barriers to learning are lifted to maximise progress. Evaluation of pupil progress shows that the impact is significant. • EHC plans are used to carefully adapt the curriculum and teaching for all pupils Assessment is accurate and personalised. All pupils have MAP (My Aspirational Progress) Targets which form the basis of their goals. Pupil progress meetings show that curriculum adaptations detailed in EHC plans lead to meaningful and measurable progress for individual pupils. • Our Total Communication approach is well established, with weekly signing support, extensive use of visuals and many pupils effectively using AAC demonstrates the commitment to developing foundational skills and preparation for adulthood. • Alongside this, foundational skills of maths (numeracy) and English (literacy and communication) are carefully assessed to identify next steps to ensure there is precision teaching and an agile approach to curriculum pathways. Pupil workbook scrutinies and Evisense data show that plans are followed and that pupils gain foundational knowledge and skills through the Key Stages. Our maths lead shares specialist knowledge of maths and SEND through her work as a regional maths advisor and our English lead has worked with Read, Write, Inc to develop their SEND offer. Progress/assessment data, and onwards destination data for demonstrate that strategies to support all cohorts are effective.
-------------------------	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPD is prioritised in school, with a regular training session, almost every week for all teachers and TAs. Several teachers have completed NPQs as part of our culture of continuous improvement. Level 4 qualifications with BHU and further online training for several others has strengthened theoretical knowledge behind developmental play and nature and the brain. Monitoring and learning walks demonstrate consistently good teaching and in many cases outstanding teaching practices. This is reflected in improved assessment data and staff survey feedback. • Leaders are committed to their wider role within Dorset's strategy to improve the experiences of, and outcomes for, pupils with SEND; Outreach and in-reach takes place, the Headteacher promotes a culture of inclusion within the Dorset Education Board and good relationships with local mainstream schools provides advice and guidance whenever needed.
<p>Actions from previous year: Accreditation for KS4 pupils – broadening our offer.</p> <p>Improve writing skills which are below reading skills (this is an ongoing area of development).</p>	<p>Impact of actions: More students achieved better Entry level grades, 30 achieved an Arts Award, Duke of Edinburgh established.</p> <p>Staff training and targeted support has increased confidence in developing early writing skills which should show improvement over time. Colourful Semantics whole school approach has impacted on sentence construction.</p>
Areas for development	To continue to develop writing skills at an appropriate level to the pupil's development.
Next steps	Further training in evidence-backed interventions for early writing skills and Colourful Semantics.

ACHIEVEMENT – EXPECTED / STRONG STANDARD

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great expertise exists within the school community ensuring that even those with very complex, severe learning difficulties make good progress. Lesson observations, learning walks and scrutiny of workbooks/Evisense shows that our pupils develop the foundational knowledge and skills they need at their level of development. • There is a strong culture of reading across the school. Our Literacy Lead has worked closely with our synthetic phonics partner (RWI) which has also enabled them to develop their programme to better meet the needs of children with SEND. • All pupils have a MAP (My Aspirational Progress) which details the small steps towards meeting individualised targets. This is analysed termly and pupils have consistently met their targets with more than 80% achieving 'outstanding progress, and no pupils at 'below expected'. Parental views gathered through annual reviews show that learning transfers to home and where there are difficulties at home, with regulation or independence, we have excellent and well-established support through our Family Support Team.
------------------	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment data shows strong results and progress over time for all pupil groups. Pupils who do not meet targets are identified speedily and measures are put in place to support them, be they academic interventions, therapeutic support with regulation or Sp+L or emotional support stemming from external factors. • Disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known to children’s social care, and those who face other barriers, are achieving well. They are developing across all areas across the curriculum and personal skills including self-regulation and independence. The attainment gap between pupils with additional disadvantage and those without has continued to be reduced over a number of years and is not discernible now. • Pupils have a good understanding, where possible, of what their next stage of their education, employment or training is. Onward destination data shows that pupils are consistently well prepared for the next stage of education, employment or training with a large percentage being able to access mainstream colleges (with support)
<p>Actions from the previous year: Focus on ensuring that each pupil is on the correct curriculum pathway: Mountjoy Sensory Curriculum, Formal Learning, Blended offer (or EYFS / Post 16). Science and ICT curriculum needs to be broadened for all abilities and greater depth taught for the most able.</p>	<p>Impact of actions: An increased number of pupils are now able to access MSC or Blended Curriculums, showing an increase in engagement with learning. Our most able pupils (few in number) have been given greater extension to their learning through a more challenging Science Curriculum which links to P4A. There is a greater focus on online safety and understanding AI which has included engaging a specialist trainer for this cohort. We have seen a reduction in reported incidents during pupils’ social media activity out of school hours.</p>
<p>Areas for development</p>	<p>To ensure there is a strong knowledge and expertise within school in Developmental Play so that our most complex pupils are given the opportunity to build a strong foundation on which to grow better communication, knowledge and understanding.</p>
<p>Next steps</p>	<p>Enrol a range of staff on Level 4 Developmental Play qualifications with Bournemouth Health University. Create suitable spaces in school for this activity. Utilise highly specialised OT support to assess pupils and supervise our specialist team.</p>

ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOUR – STRONG

<p>Strengths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountjoy School is a safe place with a strong sense of purpose and belonging. Visitors always comment on the positive and calm environment created by staff who give ‘positive unconditional regard’ at all times. • We have a very strong ethos around supporting behaviour, using Therapeutic Thinking to analyse behaviour and we rarely use punitive measure or restrictive physical intervention. Two of our teachers lead Therapeutic Thinking across the other Dorset special schools.
-------------------------	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly reports show that our school's overall attendance rate has remained good over the past years, in comparison to other special schools, particular when taking out data for pupils having extended hospital stays or hospital appointments which are outside of our control. (Weekly figures show it has been between 90-95% for the past 4 years.) In addition to well-developed emotional support across school, including our counsellor and music therapist, our targeted support for attendance has reduced persistent absenteeism. This is achieved through the Family Team, our attendance officer and for some working with health, social care or Dorset Inclusion support.
Actions from previous year: Ensure parental engagement is high by sharing daily news and using Class Dojo to send photographs home.	Impact of actions: We have maintained our good levels of attendance.
Areas for development	Increasing face-to-face parental engagement through offering family coffee mornings and training in venues other than at school (to address transport issues for many).
Next steps	Promote events through ParentPay, website and newsletters.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING – EXPECTED / STRONG

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountjoy curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education covers the issues most relevant to our school community, including online risks, and pupils feel able to discuss them openly in class. Areas such as SMSC are talked about daily through 1:1 chats and more structured class discussions in Circle Time / Tutor Time as part of our efforts to enable pupils to think beyond their own immediate issues (e.g. learning to celebrate diversity) and also to understand keeping physically and mentally healthy. In addition, work on healthy relationships, being kind and communicating well with friends and family are part of daily practice. Personal targets (MAPs) are well-developed and highly individualised, often focused on areas such as self-esteem, independence, resilience and communication. The data for progress in personal development is outstanding. Mountjoy Careers programme is based on the Gatsby Benchmarks, and pupils have regular experience and discussion about 'people around us', pathways after school and possible careers. We adjust and tailor personal development to make sure every group can participate and benefit fully, including pupils with SEND, pupils who are disadvantaged, and pupils who are vulnerable. We have started to address issues of dysregulation for many of our very complex, primary-aged pupils.
Actions from the previous year: To ensure we maintain a strong focus on P4A throughout EYFS to Post 16.	Impact of actions: We have had very good engagement from pupils, parents and staff on our enterprise and careers activities, both to develop understanding of what people

	do as adults and also what careers they may want to pursue. Our pupils mainly move onto college and are described as being confident and well-prepared for this change.
Areas for development	To ensure there is a strong knowledge and expertise within school in Developmental Play so that our most complex pupils are given the opportunity to build a strong foundation on which to grow better communication, knowledge and understanding.
Next steps	Enrol a range of staff on Level 4 Developmental Play qualifications with Bournemouth Health University. Create suitable spaces in school for this activity. Utilise highly specialised OT support to assess pupils and supervise our specialist team.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE – EXPECTED / STRONG

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders at all levels have a clear understanding of our mission, vision and values, which is underpinned by our regular Therapeutic Thinking training. • The leadership team has a strong understanding of our school's context, strengths and areas for development, informed by data and evidence. Our improvements are built on a clear strategic approach and we encourage innovation based on research. • A strong culture of wellbeing exists: staff feel valued, and have opportunities to share their perspectives through meetings, participation in working groups and surveys. There is a strong CPD offer and established progression routes. • Governors understand the school's context and improvement priorities, and challenge leaders effectively. Board meeting minutes and records of committee work show that governors ask probing questions, hold leaders to account, and strategically review key decisions. • Governors are knowledgeable about their statutory duties and carry them out effectively and understand their role as the responsible body, where applicable, in considering and addressing leaders' workload and well-being • There is always a consideration of workload and well-being across all staff.
<p>Actions from previous year:</p> <p>Governors are developing an action plan to ensure they are effective in monitoring the school</p> <p>Governor's skills audit undertaken providing a balance and knowledgeable board.</p> <p>CPD for governors is in place to ensure they know their role</p>	<p>Impact of actions:</p> <p>A clear programme of Governor monitoring with detailed reports, that are fed-back to the wider Governing Body has taken place leading to better strategic thinking and support for weaker areas, has accelerated school improvement.</p> <p>Governors attend training and are compliant and knowledgeable about safeguarding and statutory responsibilities</p>
Areas for development	<p>To support recruitment of excellent special needs teachers, explore routes into teaching for experienced and outstanding Teaching Assistants.</p> <p>Governors use the governor's action plan to monitor and challenge leadership.</p>

EARLY YEARS – STRONG

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders prioritise EYFS by ensuring resources are available including enhanced levels of Teaching Assistance and therapeutic input. As a result, exceptionally high standards of education are provided for some of Dorset’s most complex children which is transformational for many. • Planning, designing and implementing an early year’s curriculum that is ambitious for all children and achievement is high as a result. • Curriculum plans and lesson observations demonstrate a well-taught curriculum that sequences key knowledge. Lesson observations show teachers are consistently sticking to the sequence to deliver key knowledge and skills and to support regulation and engagement. • Children are supported to acquire a wide range of communication systems so they can understand the purpose of communication and begin to communicate effectively. Work scrutiny and lesson observations show that pupils have the ability to become ‘classroom ready’. Data shows that pupils routinely reach outstanding levels of development from their starting points. • The EYFS Lead shares her learning and best practice externally to support system-wide improvement, for example with other schools, professionals, their community and stakeholders, including local and/or national networks 	
Actions from previous year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that after a planned significant expansion of EYFS that quality first teaching and enhanced levels of teaching assistants is delivered consistently within the two-classroom set up. • Embed Total Communication as a fundamental approach in EYFS. 	Impact of actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised and implemented a two-classroom set up that shows a progression of skills developmentally. • Monitored and identified key areas of development for teaching and teaching assistant staff. • Actioned mentoring and support package to include team planning, team teaching and modelling. • All pupils have a form of communication tailored to their individual needs that can be used. 	
Areas for development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.To set up a bespoke training program for new staff in SEN EYFS. 2.To ensure accelerated progress for Investigator class. 	
Next steps	<p>Identify areas that are essential for teaching staff to be skilled and knowledgeable in when working in SEN EYFS and create videos and training slides on these to deliver to new staff as part of an induction training package: Communication Engagement + Developmental Play</p> <p>Enrol required staff onto the SEN EYFS training program. Coach and mentor required staff</p>	
Next steps	<p>Investigate Teacher’s Apprenticeships and Graduate teaching Programme routes.</p>	

POST-16 PROVISION – EXPECTED	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students develop their knowledge and skills across the curriculum to prepare them well for the next stage of life, whether further education or a social care package of support. • Teachers link curriculum learning with adult life; they highlight progression routes for students and how the knowledge and skills developed in it are relevant to Post 19 pathways • Work scrutinies and lesson observations show that pupils have age-appropriate knowledge and skills across the curriculum which relate to growing independence and P4A. • Assessment data shows high pupil achievement relating to their personal targets (MAPs) • Leaders provide a suitable range of wider opportunities and non-qualification activities, including personal, social, health and economic education, volunteering, citizenship and other experiences in the student's local community, that develop their confidence and prepare them for adult life; activities are relevant and varied and students from all backgrounds take part. • Leaders regularly evaluate the impact of the activities and refine what students are offered • Destination data shows that pupils are well-equipped for the next stage of education, employment or training, and are able to go onto destinations that meet their goals and aspirations. A review of our leavers' destination data shows that we have been successful in securing either appropriate social care arrangements or further education opportunities.
Actions from the previous year: Utilising Off Site provisions – Mapperton, Crewkerne Leisure Centre, Weymouth and Portland Sailing Academy.	Impact of actions: Students developed a sense of their community and were able to access local leisure facilities appropriately and successfully. Developing their confidence and supporting their independence. Working at Mapperton filling the bug hotel students worked towards their volunteering section of their Duke of Edinburgh award
Areas for development	To update the Post 16 Curriculum to include offsite opportunities for changing cohort.
Next steps	Investigate merging parts MSC/MOVE and current Post 16 curriculums to develop curriculum to suit needs of incoming cohort.

EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT SUMMARY EVALUATION

Sample of documentation to support judgements:

Ofsted inspection report	Dated November 2022
Safeguarding	Latest Audit Feb 2026
Inclusion	Pupil Premium Report / FLO Case Studies / Therapists Reports
Curriculum and teaching	Mountjoy Curriculum / Curriculum Action Plan / Ma/Eng Reports / Examples of MAPs / Monitoring Walks / Case Studies)
Achievement	Assessment Analysis / Case Studies / Pupil Passports / Examples of MAPs
Attendance and behaviour	Attendance analysis / Case Studies / Therapeutic Thinking Overview / Behaviour Analysis SIMS
Personal development and wellbeing	Wellbeing Support report / Case studies
Leadership and governance	SEF / Governor's Action Plan / SIP / FGB Minutes / Mountjoy Farm
Early years	Action Plan / Case Studies
Post-16 provision	Action Plan / Case Studies