

Mountjoy School

Head Teacher: Gill Howard

Mountjoy School is a maintained day special school for children aged between 2.5 and 19 years with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). We provided a range of differentiated and appropriately paced curriculums. We currently have around 100 pupils and admission arrangements are done through Dorset local authority, so need to be managed through a SEND Provision lead, either from Dorset or another local authority. We pride ourselves on our work with families and would welcome a call or a visit from anyone considering a place with us.

Cohort profile

The main area of need for pupils is cognition and learning, particularly Moderate and Severe Learning Difficulties. Pupils might also have other complex needs, such as Autism, Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities, use a wheelchair or have complex medical needs. Many have sensory processing difficulties and some have hearing or vision impairment. All pupils have an EHCP. Pupils mainly live within the West area of Dorset but some attend from much further away.

The space

The school is located on a shared site, with Beaminster School. The school opened in 2012, and is purpose built to be accessible and on one floor. There are a range of specialist rooms, including a sensory room, soft playroom, emotional support room and a hall, which is used for assemblies, lunch and P.E. lessons. There is also a hydrotherapy pool on site. Outside, there are a number of play areas, as well as a sensory garden, beach and forest school areas, large play equipment and a horticulture area.

Class set up

Classes are based on level and type of need and, more loosely on Key Stage, rather than year group. Class sizes vary depending on the needs of the pupils with some classes being tailored to a particular approach. Primary classes have 8-11 pupils and Secondary classes have 10-12 pupils. Each class has one teacher and at least one TA. Some pupils have higher levels of TA support, but we spread this amongst a class team to avoid a child/young person becoming overly reliant on a particular member staff.

Core offer

Our vision is that we are making a difference today, for tomorrow and there is a strong focus on preparation for adulthood and gaining independence. Every pupil has a 'MAP' (My Aspirational Progress) with personalised targets which lead towards achieving outcomes on EHCPs. The school operates five separate curriculums to enable a bespoke approach and a high level of personalisation. These are:

- The Early Years Foundation Stage Development Matters for pupils aged up to 6 years.
- The informal multi-sensory curriculum for pupils at the earliest stages of learning.
- The semi-formal curriculum for pupils with severe learning difficulties.
- The formal curriculum, which is based on the national curriculum and is for pupils who can access a broad range of subjects in more depth.
- The Key Stage Four and Post-16 curriculum is based on ASDAN Life Skills Challenges. Pupils also have the opportunity to study functional maths and English, where appropriate.

In addition, a range of awards are offered, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award, the John Muir Award and the Trinity Arts Award.

We are ambitious for our pupils and want all to lead a happy, fulfilled and purposeful life.

Approaches and Staff Expertise

Our teachers and TAs all have training in working with additional needs. All staff receive regular training in Dorset Steps, a therapeutic approach to building positive relationships to support the development of pro-social rather than anti-social behaviours.

Staff are trained to deliver swing therapy, hydrotherapy, sensory diets, rebound therapy, Lego therapy and beach and forest school. We are a MOVE accredited school, with several members of staff trained in helping pupils to develop physical skills. We are a Unicef Gold Rights Respecting School with person-centred approaches running through the heart of all we do.

There are dedicated family liaison officers on site, who work closely with families.

Access to outside professionals

Depending on need, pupils can access Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Speech and Language Therapy on site. The school also has a link EP and a consultant paediatrician from Dorset County Hospital holds regular clinics at the school. We also hold Swifts clinics; Swifts is a multidisciplinary service for pupils with learning disability and challenging behaviours. Many of our staff have received training from NHS colleagues in order to be able to support medical needs such as providing physiotherapy programmes, medication administration or feeding protocols.

Transition to FE and supporting independence

Pupils are supported to find an appropriate FE place if they are able to move on to mainstream for post-16, with visits to provision within the area. Pupils who remain at the school for post-16 have the opportunity to undertake work experience, visits to employers and interview practice, alongside ongoing discussions about their future plans. The curriculum also supports development in life and living skills so that our leavers are as independent as they can be as they prepare for adulthood.