

# Inspection of Courtlands School

Widey Lane, Crownhill, Plymouth, Devon, PL6 5JS

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Inspection dates: 5 to 6 March 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
The quality of education	<b>Inadequate</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Inadequate</b>
Personal development	<b>Inadequate</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Early years provision	<b>Inadequate</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

The executive headteacher of this school is Hannah Smart. This school is part of Transforming Futures Trust which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Matt Sambrook and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Clive Grace.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Many pupils' social and emotional wellbeing is not well supported at the school. As a result, some pupils become very distressed and can become physically and verbally aggressive. Staff have not been trained effectively in how to de-escalate and support pupils when they are socially and emotionally unwell. Some pupils are intimidated by this behaviour as it creates an unsettled learning environment.

Staff routinely use physical restraint to manage pupils when they are in emotional crisis. However, many members of staff use physical restraint inappropriately and inaccurately. This results in injury to staff and to some physical and emotional harm to pupils. Leaders have begun to review the approach to the management of behaviour, but it is too early to judge its impact.

Due to the high turnover of staff and the high presence of temporary agency staff, some pupils have difficulties forming relationships and engaging with school life. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is not well embedded. Pupils do not learn about the importance of healthy relationships in depth. They do not learn about fundamental British values, such as democracy. Therefore, pupils are not prepared to be responsible, respectful, kind citizens of the world beyond school.

Pupils are very positive about the forest school and enjoy exploring the natural world. They have opportunities to learn to swim and visit local places of interest.

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

The vision of school leaders is not shared by all staff. This has hindered leaders' plans to improve the school. A phonics programme has been established for some pupils to support their early reading development. However, pupils do not confidently use their phonic knowledge to read unknown words. Books match pupils' stage in early reading but not their age-related interests. Teachers do not routinely adapt the ways in which they teach reading and writing skills to support pupils to learn well.

Leaders recognise that many pupils have significant communication difficulties, but there is not a coherent approach to supporting these pupils. Consequently, many pupils do not learn how to articulate their views and knowledge about the world around them. This significantly hampers pupils' relationships with others and their ability to learn other subjects in the curriculum.

The curriculum is not well developed. Leaders' plans to improve the structure and teaching of the curriculum have not yet been realised. Many members of staff have not been trained to support the learning needs of pupils successfully. All pupils have education, health and care (EHC) plans, but many do not receive the therapeutic interventions outlined in these plans. Some pupils' sensory needs are not addressed effectively, resulting in them experiencing prolonged distress. For example, some

pupils should receive speech and language therapy, but do not. Consequently, pupils are not supported to learn well and are not prepared for their next steps.

The school has identified strategies to support the behaviour needs of each pupil, but staff have not been trained to implement this effectively. Due to the lack of training and high turnover of staff, many do not have specialist knowledge about how best to support pupils' cognitive, social and emotional responses to the world around them. Pupils are not supported to make friendships well.

The leadership of the school has undergone staffing turbulence. Their recent actions have resulted in a reduced number of suspensions. In addition, the overall attendance of pupils has improved. However, there is a disproportionate number of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding who do not attend school regularly.

Children in the early years do not learn well. The curriculum has not been thoughtfully designed to meet their individual learning needs. The curriculum does not prioritise children's language learning. Staff do not support children to develop communication skills, so that they can articulate their views. Children learn a phonics curriculum, but this is in its infancy. There are gaps in children's knowledge which are not clearly identified and therefore not rectified. The learning environment does not support pupils' physical and emotional development well.

Governance is not strong. The board of trustees do not hold the school effectively to account. Some staff are negative about the support they receive to manage their workload and well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school has not made sure that all staff are well trained to keep pupils safe. Staff apply physical restraint to pupils excessively, resulting in injury to pupils. Consequently, pupils are not safe from physical and emotional harm at the school. As staff do not manage pupils' behaviour effectively, this escalates and has resulted in staff being hurt. Many members of staff and some parents raised their concerns with the lead inspector about the use of restraint.

The school has ensured that safeguarding concerns are recorded appropriately and actions are pertinent and timely. The single central record is compliant.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school has failed to create an effective culture of safeguarding. This puts pupils at serious risk of harm. Pupils are not safe from the harm that can be caused by inappropriate and inaccurate use of physical restraint. The school must ensure that all staff are well trained in physical interventions and that they are

used only as a last resort when a child is a risk to themselves and others. The school must ensure that all staff understand their statutory duty to keep pupils safe.

- The school has not ensured that the curriculum is well structured to help pupils to learn successfully. Many staff have not been trained on how to tailor their teaching in line with pupils' individual special educational needs and/or disability (SEND). The school must ensure that staff receive specialist training in how to meet the needs of pupils, so that they can learn successfully.
- The school has not ensured that pupils receive the therapeutic support outlined in their EHC plans. Consequently, pupils do not receive the specialist help they require to learn the curriculum well. The school must ensure that pupils receive their statutory entitlement to therapeutic interventions.
- Children in the early years foundation stage do not learn a well-structured curriculum designed to meet their individual starting points. Children do not develop strong language skills to communicate their views about themselves and the world. The school must ensure that the early years curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of children, so that they are well prepared for their next steps.
- The school's approach to phonics and the development of pupils' communication skills is weak. Staff have not been trained effectively to support pupils' communications skills. Consequently, many pupils struggle to communicate their views about the world around them. Leaders must ensure that a coherent communications and early reading curriculum is developed and tailored to meet the needs of pupils and children in early years.
- The persistent absence of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is high. The school must ensure that parents, carers and pupils understand the link between school attendance and future life chances, so that pupils attend more regularly.
- The vision of leaders is not shared by some members of staff. This has hampered the school's improvement plans. The school needs to communicate their plans for improvement with all staff, so that these plans are enacted immediately.
- Some members of staff do not feel that their wellbeing and workload are sufficiently supported by the school. The board of trustees has an inaccurate view of the school and the support in place for staff. The board of trustees must gather more accurate information with which to pose challenge and monitor the impact of the school's improvement priorities.
- Having considered the evidence, we strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144009
<b>Local authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	10333217
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	100
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Clive Gracie
<b>CEO</b>	Matt Sambrook
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hannah Smart
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.transformingfutures.org.uk">www.transformingfutures.org.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	17 – 18 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Courtlands School is a special school for primary age pupils with severe and moderate learning difficulties and social and emotional mental health difficulties.
- All pupils who attend have an EHC plan. Admission to the school is through a referral from the local authority where the pupils live.
- The school is part of Transforming Futures Trust.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## 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.

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 judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors held discussions with the executive head teacher and members of the leadership team.
- An inspector held discussions with two members of the board of trustees and an education officer from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, geography and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In each subject, inspectors met with senior and curriculum leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with staff to consider their views.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers who responded to the confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the Ofsted online questionnaires.

### **Inspection team**

Susan Aykin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Marie Thomas

His Majesty's Inspector

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