

# Inspection of Critchill Special School

Nunney Road, Frome, Somerset BA11 4LB

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Inspection dates:	5 and 6 November 2024
The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

The executive headteacher of this school is Sophie Addison and the headteacher is Emma West. The school is part of Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Alun Williams, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tony Wells.

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

Pupils thrive at Critchill Special School. The curriculum enables and supports each pupil to flourish and excel in their learning. They develop socially, emotionally, academically and physically exceptionally well. Pupils, including children in Reception Year and sixth-form students, are very well prepared for the world beyond school.

The provision is planned with precision, ensuring that each pupil's learning needs and strengths are expertly addressed. Pupils are enthused by learning and relish being successful in a breadth of areas. Through their involvement in school life, they learn about their roles as citizens in their communities. For example, pupils participate in the school council where they support the development of the school. Pupils learn through the 'Critchill Code' the importance of consent and healthy relationships. Consequently, pupils, including children in Reception Year and sixth-form students, learn how to forge strong friendships. For example, older pupils support younger pupils in playing football and playing with the playground equipment.

Pupils learn the routines of school very well. Children in Reception Year know the importance of turn taking and sharing. Students in sixth form demonstrate maturity when considering their next steps. The school is a harmonious learning environment.

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

Through a highly bespoke curriculum, the school enables and supports pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to be successful in preparing for the adult world. The school's vision is shared by all staff. Using a breadth of information about each pupil, including children in Reception Year and sixth-form students, the school plans with precision what pupils need to learn and how they will learn. Pupils are highly enthused learners and strive to achieve.

The school prioritises the development of pupils' communication skills. The personalised approaches designed by staff enable pupils to communicate their thinking very well. For example, pupils learn to interpret symbols as well as use sign language to respond to the world around them. In addition, the school prioritises phonics, enabling some pupils to develop into fluent readers. The school provides tailored support to pupils who may struggle with reading. For instance, pupils learn phonics while experiencing the sensory support of water in the hydrotherapy pool. Students in the sixth form select their own reading texts and are supported to read with progressively more independence.

Children in Reception Year develop very strong communication skills through rhyme, song and immersion in sensory experiences. The warm, nurturing relationships between staff and children further support their early communications development. Children's knowledge of number is skilfully extended through visual, sensory and auditory activities that engage and focus their attention. The school prioritises the development of children's character. Children learn to share, take turns and demonstrate kindness and respect towards each other. Children's physical development is expertly developed through bespoke therapeutic interventions enabling pupils to develop excellent mobility. The

school is tenacious in monitoring the impact of the curriculum on each child and continually adapts the provision dependent on what pupils know and do not know.

In the sixth form, students learn a range of subjects. The school plans 'profoundly personalised' curriculums for each student that address their needs and strengths with expertise. Building on their prior knowledge, students learn English and mathematics exceptionally well, enabling them to gain the skills they require for adulthood. Through expertly planned opportunities, students learn about work and life in the wider community. The careers programme is exceptional. For example, some students learn about bicycle maintenance and have work placements with local employers. Some students learn about catering and work in the school's catering van at Frome market. Students are enabled to be valued members of the community and are fully prepared to enjoy positive, fruitful lives as adults.

The school's approach to managing the behaviour of pupils is visionary. Through very strong relationships with staff, pupils are supported very well to develop strong social interactions. Through bespoke approaches that recognise the needs of each pupil, the school enables pupils' needs to be met effectively. As a result, pupils' behaviour is strong and their attitudes to learning impeccable. Similarly, through personalised approaches, issues regarding attendance are swiftly addressed. Strong links with parents and carers further enable the right support to be put in place to ensure that pupils routinely attend school.

Leadership is outstanding at all levels. Governors and the trust hold the school to account effectively. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support for their well-being and workload. Parents are similarly effusive in their praise of the school in transforming the lives of their children.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **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>	147126
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10344822
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	97
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	10
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Tony Wells
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Alun Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Emma West
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.critchillschool.co.uk/">www.critchillschool.co.uk/</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	27 and 28 June 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with complex needs and severe learning difficulties.
- All pupils have education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- The school joined the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership in June 2019.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors held discussions with the executive headteacher, headteacher and members of the leadership team.
- An inspector held discussions with the CEO of the trust and members, including the chair, of the local governing body and a member of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, mathematics, and personal, social and health education. 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 from the Ofsted online questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Richard Vaughan

Ofsted Inspector

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