

Inspection of The Harbour School

Tipner Lane, Tipner, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 8RA

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils enjoy coming to this school. Others do not. The behaviour of some pupils is exceptional. The behaviour and attitudes to learning of others are not. Unsurprisingly, pupils have mixed views about their school because their experiences vary so widely across the different campuses. One pupil said that staff are 'here for me, when my mind is not clear'. Other pupils voiced that the school is a safe place for them and that they would not change much about any aspect. However, variations in the quality of provision and inconsistent expectations of staff across the different sites of the school mean that it is difficult to identify or describe an overarching ethos or culture as things presently stand at The Harbour School.

On a more encouraging note, suspensions are falling, though the staff survey confirmed that pupils' conduct can be challenging at times. Senior leaders aspire to make the positive changes required, but more needs to be done to realise their ambitions. This is exemplified by some pupils enjoying regular residential trips or their work with The Prince's Trust, helping them to develop the crucial life skills they will need in the future. Sadly, not all pupils benefit from such opportunities yet.

Responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey were few. Those parents that left comments mirrored what the inspection team found. Namely, the experiences of pupils at the different sites of this school are too varied. More needs to be done by leaders, staff, parents and pupils alike, to make this a consistently good school at each campus.

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

Leaders have a vision for the school which has not yet been realised. There are some very positive aspects about the provision, but a number of factors are impacting negatively on leaders' aspirations. Significant in the numerous complexities of the school is the fact that it is spread over five different sites. This means that there are multiple and very intricate challenges for leaders to manage. Not least of these is the poor quality of accommodation at the Tipner and Vanguard campuses, which are damaged, disrespected, and not fit for purpose.

The school's curriculum fully meets the needs of some pupils but not all. Leaders know that the model of teaching pupils who are dual registered (attending the school as an alternative provision while also on the roll of another school) and pupils with more complex needs (who are solely registered at this school) is not working well enough. Discussions with the local authority, who commission all the places at the school, have already taken place. Immediate action is now needed to address this inherited, intricate problem.

Curriculum leaders and newly appointed special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) are having a positive impact on the quality of education the school provides. The priorities they have identified for improvement make sense. SENCOs

are working hard to share the good practice evident in the school further. Subject leaders are working to improve the consistency in the way subjects are planned and delivered across all phases of the school.

Despite the drawbacks with the way some of the curriculum is delivered to dual- and single-registered pupils, there are some successes worth celebrating. The school's reintegration programme, which is delivered mostly online, works well. Many pupils achieve meaningful qualifications through this programme, including at GCSE. This is also the case for pupils following other pathways, some with a vocational element, enabling them to access college and apprenticeships. Additionally, the school's very bespoke provision at Stamshaw and The Bridge is also successful in supporting pupils with more complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Effective careers education is in place. The school is rebuilding its work experience offer in light of the pandemic. Bespoke pieces of work are making positive inroads in developing pupils' awareness of the dangers of knife crime, gang culture and substance abuse.

Leaders have identified actions needed to strengthen the school's provision for pupils' personal development. The school is currently revising its personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme to ensure that it is delivered consistently and with fidelity across all phases of the school. This includes teaching pupils about different religions and cultures so that they are better prepared for life in modern Britain.

Staff vacancies on both the Tipner and Vanguard sites are high. Supply agency staff are valued by leaders. However, consistency in approach and relationships between pupils and staff are inevitably impacted by these arrangements. Leadership of these campuses is also in a transitional stage. This is not helping pupils to understand the expectations, boundaries or routines that leaders and staff set and expect. The headteacher fully understands the challenges that the school faces. He has ensured that work has started to address them. Despite this, much more needs to be done by all stakeholders, including the trust and local authority, to make sure that the pupils who attend this school get the first-class education that they are entitled to.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Suitable recruitment checks and safeguarding training are in place. However, the school's safeguarding policy is not followed by all staff. Inconsistencies in safeguarding records mean that there is potential for important information, including repeated safeguarding concerns, to be missed. Additionally, actions taken by the school, including contact with parents, are sometimes omitted from the records.

Weaknesses in the school's procedures for recording concerns hinder leaders' attempts to identify and address any worrying patterns. For example, sometimes

important safeguarding information is recorded in different places by different people. This frustrates leaders' ability to locate key information when needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leadership of safeguarding is not strong enough. The school's record-keeping system linked to safeguarding is fragmented. Key information is not recorded or acted on in a consistent way. Leaders need to rationalise and simplify the system they use to identify and help pupils at risk of harm. This will enable them to manage all aspects of the safeguarding of pupils in a more effective and timely manner.
- The fabric of some of the school's accommodation is shabby, poorly maintained and not fit for purpose. The poor quality of some of the school's premises is directly impacting on pupils' behaviour and attitudes, exacerbated by many pupils' complex SEND. Poor behaviour is in turn affecting the quality of education the school can provide. Leaders, including those from the multi-academy trust, have been aware of this situation for some time. Now is the time to act urgently and decisively.
- The school's curriculum is not meeting the needs of all pupils. The model for delivering it to pupils who are enrolled on a short- or long- term basis is not working well enough for either group. Leaders should act to review and rationalise the way the curriculum is implemented in classrooms, so that pupils' pathways are more suited to their end points and future aspirations.
- Pupils do not behave well enough across all campuses of the school, despite the recent introduction of a new behaviour policy. Expectations of what is acceptable and what is not are inconsistent. High staff turnover and poor premises and accommodation on some sites do not help. Leaders need to act to stabilise the workforce, including in positions of leadership. Further work to supplement the recent useful training on establishing more positive relationships between staff and pupils is also needed.
- The school's offer to support pupils' personal development is not implemented in a consistent way across all campuses. Some gains have been made since January 2022. More needs to be done to ensure that there is a better match between what leaders intend and the reality. This should include ensuring that pupils learn about different faiths and cultures in a more coherent way on all sites of the school. It will mean that pupils have a better understanding of the world around them and are better equipped for life after leaving this school.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	147720
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10227537
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special and alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	185
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Baker
Headteacher	Matthew Mcloughlin-Parker
Website	www.theharbourschoolportsmouth.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Harbour School is a special school and alternative provision for pupils with a range of social, emotional, mental health and/or medical needs. Some pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The school is part of the Delta Education Trust, a multi-academy trust based across Hampshire and Dorset. The school has a local governing board with delegated powers from the board of trustees of the multi-academy trust.
- The school is spread over four sites in the Portsmouth local authority area. In addition to the main campus at Tipner, these include Cosham, Sundridge Close, PO6 3JL; Vanguard, Sundridge Close, PO6 3LP; and Stamshaw, Ranelagh Road, PO2 8HA.
- Some pupils are single registered and have places at the school on the basis of the provision being a special school. Other pupils attend the school as an alternative provision, also being on the roll of another school within the city.
- The school also provides a re-integration programme for pupils who find it difficult to attend school for a number of different reasons. Much of this work is carried out online. The school also provides outreach support for other schools in the local authority area.

- Many pupils have been out of mainstream schools for a considerable period of time before attending this school. The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, members of the school's leadership team, curriculum leaders and teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing board. Inspectors met briefly with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. Inspectors also met with the trust's director of school improvement on a number of occasions throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with an officer from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and PSHE. Deep dives included visiting lessons across all campuses of the school, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils.
- There were no pupils attending the school in key stage 1 or Years 3 and 4 at the time of the inspection.
- Inspectors checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. They also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. Four different meetings were held with representative groups of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted's parent survey. The views of staff and pupils were also considered through Ofsted's confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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