

Harbour School

Elmsvale Road, Dover, CT179PS

Inspection dates

14–15 January and 3 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The quality of education and care at the Harbour is exceptionally high.
- Pupils start school with gaps in their learning and with very low levels of attainment for their age. They make rapid progress in all subjects as a result of exceptional teaching.
- The very strong whole-school focus on reading and writing has had a very positive impact on pupils' enjoyment, confidence and attainment.
- Teachers are passionate about their subjects and plan interesting activities to help pupils make fast progress. Consequently, pupils are able to join in fully and enjoy learning.
- Adults work extremely well together to develop pupils' social skills and improve behaviour. Adults are excellent role models and demonstrate the highest levels of respect for each other and for pupils.
- Pupils learn to behave exceptionally well. They feel safe in school and are overwhelmingly positive about how well cared for they are. They show high levels of respect for visitors and new staff.
- Teachers know well how pupils are doing and plan programmes to support those who may need to catch up.
- Inspirational leadership by the headteacher, supported by the governing body and a very strong school leadership team, has resulted in improvements in pupils' achievement and teaching since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons in a range of subjects and year groups.
- All of the lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses to the online parents' and carers' survey, Parent View, and parents' and carers' comments in annual reviews.
- Meetings were held with various members of staff and representatives from the governing body and local authority. Inspectors spoke to pupils and looked at behaviour in lessons, break times and around the school.
- The inspectors also looked at documentation about pupils' progress, teaching and planning. The school's documents on safeguarding were scrutinised, together with records of attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading and looked at their work.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of investigations by the appropriate authorities into allegations of wrong-doing which included concerns about child protection or safeguarding arrangements. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incidents were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.
- One of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the school in April 2013, after the investigation was concluded, to gather further evidence about the school's leadership and management and the school's systems for keeping pupils safe.
- During this second visit, the inspector accompanied the headteacher and deputy headteacher on a 'learning walk', visiting a small number of lessons briefly and observing teachers and pupils at work. He met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the educational visits coordinator and the finance officer. He also met with three members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority. He scrutinised a range of documents, including the staff handbook, records of risk assessments and recent external reviews of financial arrangements and the school's systems for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Helen Howard, Lead inspector (January)	Additional Inspector
Maureen Coleman	Additional Inspector
Christopher Wood (April)	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Harbour is a special school for pupils aged from six to 16 years of age, most of who are from White British backgrounds. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most have complex behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and additional learning difficulties. A few have autistic spectrum disorders. Most pupils are boys.
- Pupils travel from a wide area across Kent to attend the school.
- Nearly three quarters of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals, pupils from service families and those in care), which is well above the national average.
- Some Key Stage 4 pupils attend vocational courses part time at K College in Folkestone, Dover and Ashford, and at Canterbury College.
- The school has specialist status for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and provides support and training services to other schools within the Dover, Deal and Sandwich cluster.
- The headteacher additionally leads a specialist teaching and learning resource for the local authority. This provides specialist teachers and support and training to other schools for a range of special educational needs, including hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties, and speech, language and communication difficulties.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Ensure information shared with the governing body is presented in the clearest way so that they are able to check policy is always followed and fully challenge leaders about their deployment of resources and the achievement of pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils join and leave the school at different times. When they start school, many pupils have well below average levels of attainment for their age as a result of their learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. Most have gaps in their knowledge and have low self-esteem or confidence.
- From the time they start school, pupils in every year make rapid progress due to excellent levels of care and outstanding teaching. Pupils reach individual levels of attainment by the end of Year 11 that vary widely. Almost all pupils achieve either GCSE, Entry Level or BTEC qualifications in a variety of subjects including English and mathematics by the time they leave school. This represents exceptional progress from their starting points, including the progress made by those eligible to receive free school meals.
- All pupils eligible to receive pupil premium funding demonstrate the same pattern of achievement as their peers, including the attainment levels reached in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 4. This same pattern of achievement applies also to both girls and boys, and to pupils with different learning difficulties, including those with an autistic spectrum disorder. Pupils achieve equally well irrespective of their particular special educational needs.
- The number of qualifications taken by pupils and the grades they achieve have improved over the last three years. Pupils are therefore very well prepared for their next stage of education. There is no early entry for GCSE examinations.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy and make fast progress in a range of vocational subjects in Key Stage 4, including those taken at local colleges. This alternative provision is very effective. For example, in a Key Stage 4 BTEC catering lesson, pupils made excellent progress when cooking a roast dinner; they were able to follow recipes, choose how to prepare vegetables, use equipment correctly and identify the nutritional value of the food.
- The school is justifiably proud of its success in accelerating achievement in reading and writing. In every area of the school, there are displays, books and information to promote reading, including a school target to read as many words as possible. Primary pupils talk about how they love reading. Teachers encourage pupils to read aloud in lessons and research information from texts, and they do so with increasing confidence. This enthusiasm is infectious and, as a result, pupils who had previously not enjoyed reading become more confident and make outstanding progress.
- Pupils make rapid progress in numeracy skills over time. However, the leaders recognise that progress has not been as rapid as in English in a few classes. They have introduced a new programme that is already accelerating rates of progress in those classes.
- Pupils who are in receipt of the Year 7 catch-up funding are offered individual tuition to support reading and writing and school data show that they are making rapid gains in their progress.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers and teaching assistants have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. From the moment that pupils enter a classroom, adults ensure they are fully focused on learning.
- In most classes, pupils have a wide range of abilities. Teachers expertly plan activities to make sure that they all succeed, including the most able. Teachers often plan different activities for these pupils that keep them interested by providing them with harder work. Consequently they reach higher levels of achievement and make faster progress.
- Teachers routinely plan interesting activities that arouse pupils' curiosity and help them to stay motivated. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson looking at how fossils were formed, pupils made fast progress because they had opportunities to see and handle real fossils, to ask questions that increased their knowledge and to do further research that consolidated what they had learnt.

- Teachers and teaching assistants make good links to literacy and numeracy across all subjects. The teaching of reading is linked especially well to writing and this results in pupils' exceptional progress from their individual starting points. Adults consistently use key technical words and reinforce the pupils' use of them during lessons. They introduce new vocabulary and encourage pupils to do the same.
- Teachers check pupils' understanding throughout lessons and regularly track their progress. They give helpful comments on pupils' work and use lesson time to give ideas and encourage pupils to reflect on how to improve, which helps them to make even faster progress.
- If pupils' rate of progress slows, meetings between staff ensure that pupils have the right support, including one-to-one tuition, to help them catch up very quickly.
- A recently introduced mathematics programme is proving effective in further enhancing pupils' progress in the subject, notably in a small minority of the teaching where progress has not been as rapid as in English.
- Teaching focuses strongly on developing pupils' social skills. Pupils learn how to share ideas, to work as a team and to listen respectfully to each other. These skills, alongside their academic skills ensure pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In this calm and positive environment, pupils settle quickly and respond to the high levels of respect and care that they are shown by adults. Interesting displays and the tidy environment demonstrate a pride in the school.
- The school has built its success on the very strong relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils take increasing responsibility for managing their concerns or conflicts supported by school staff. This helps them to understand more clearly of how their behaviour affects others.
- Pupils respond well to the rewards scheme for good behaviour and effort. They are increasingly able to reflect on how well they have done in each lesson and are proud of what they achieve. There is strong evidence to show that pupils' behaviour improves considerably during their time at the school, including those who have particular behavioural difficulties. Many pupils spoke of how much the school has helped them. They especially value the fact that staff do not give up on them. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced since the last inspection as behaviour has improved.
- Older pupils rise to the challenge of being on the student leaders' team; some are trained as 'mediators', who support pupils with conflicts or problems; others are actively involved in staff recruitment interviews. Pupils say that the staff always listen and respond to their views.
- Pupils are cheerfully welcomed by staff at the start of each day with a 'check in' and breakfast. This helps pupils to get ready for learning as the long taxi journey to school can be stressful for some pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that staff keep a very careful eye on them and that they feel safe in school. Almost all parents and carers who responded to Parent View agreed. The school responds well to safeguarding incidents and recent building work has made the site even more secure for everyone. Leaders commission external reviews of their practice to ensure that there is no complacency.
- Occasionally, and as a last resort, staff have to manage pupils physically for the safety of others. When this was observed during the inspection, staff followed expected procedures and were able to quickly and safely calm pupils down. Such incidents are few; they are consistently witnessed, recorded and carefully monitored. All adults are exceptionally skilful in managing sometimes challenging behaviour, often with humour and patience.
- Pupils know about bullying including cyber bullying and prejudice. They say that it rarely happens but that when it does, it is quickly and effectively dealt with by staff. The school tackles any discrimination robustly.
- Most pupils attend regularly because the school has very effective procedures for following up absences, including good partnerships with other agencies.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's excellent leadership has inspired a culture of high expectations for all pupils that is shared by governors, staff and pupils. She is supported by a very strong team of senior leaders. Together with subject leaders, they have a relentless focus on making sure that pupils achieve the very best they can. Subject leaders are very effective in driving improvements across the school in their specific area of responsibility.
- Leaders and managers monitor the work of the school carefully. They regularly check the quality of teaching and link this to teachers' performance management. Teachers have the opportunity to improve through coaching, individual support and professional development. They observe the excellent practice that exists in the school and visit other schools.
- The improvements in teaching and achievement, together with reductions in exclusions and improvements in attendance since the last inspection, demonstrate that leaders and managers have the capacity to make further improvements.
- The school's curriculum has a good balance of academic and vocational subjects. Pupils benefit from an excellent enrichment programme which offers them experiences that they might not otherwise have, including mountain biking, outdoor education, and trips such as skiing in Italy. Pupils enter the 'Kent Chef of the Year' and for two years running pupils have reached the finals.
- Physical education plays an important part at the school and pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of sports and stay healthy. The physical education participation funding is enabling more staff to train as coaches in different sports. It is also enabling the school to run a summer holiday club. The school can demonstrate that the high numbers of pupils that attend the summer holiday club are better prepared for learning and make faster progress when the new academic year begins.
- Equal opportunities are promoted very well, for example with the effective use of pupil premium funding for extra tuition and trips.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness very well, with very good opportunities to consider other cultures, faiths and religions in subjects such as religious education and personal and social education, and cultural themed days.
- The school works closely with many other agencies and partners to support pupils in the school as well as the local area. In addition to providing placements for trainee teachers from Christchurch Canterbury University, the school manages the local authority specialist teaching and learning provision, which is highly valued by schools. It also provides training to schools in restorative approaches and in behaviour management techniques.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this outstanding school in order to monitor its performance. Most recently, the local authority have supported the school in improving the robustness of their financial management policies and in developing governors' ability to monitor the work of the school more closely.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors make good use of the strong skills of individual members to monitor the work of the school. They know how well all pupils and groups of pupils are doing; they interpret data accurately although it is not always presented to them in a clear way.
 - They have a thorough knowledge of the quality of teaching and often visit lessons themselves to monitor different aspects. They use information about teachers' performance effectively to ensure that teachers are rewarded appropriately and that underperformance is tackled quickly.
 - They ensure that the school meets statutory duties, including those pertaining to safeguarding. They check the use of resources, including additional funding for the pupil premium and Year 7 catch up, to ensure they have a very positive impact on pupils' achievement.
 - In the past governors have not had all of the information that they need to fully monitor specific aspects of the school's performance and compliance with school's policies. At times, school financial policies have not been adhered to and governors were slow to recognise this. Recent and ongoing improvements to the school's formal systems for recording information and checking systems are robustly and quickly addressing this issue.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119046
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	432081

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	6–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Brazier
Headteacher	Denise Baker
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2009
Telephone number	01304 201964
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Email address	office@harbour.kent.sch.uk

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