

The Polygon School

Handel Terrace, Southampton, SO15 2FH

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well from very low starting points, and learn successfully in many subjects.
- Teaching is good at both key stages and ensures good personal development and good academic progress.
- All pupils enjoy the interesting variety of activities the school offers.
- School leaders and the governing body have high expectations for behaviour and achievement and communicate these successfully to pupils, parents and carers and staff.
- The school knows itself and the pupils well, through good individual tracking of academic progress and behaviour and timely intervention when necessary.
- The atmosphere in the school is welcoming and positive, and staff treat the pupils with tolerance, kindness and respect. Each pupil is valued highly and given equal opportunity to succeed.
- Pupils, including those who have significant emotional or psychological difficulties, behave consistently well and feel safe because they are given skilful individual support by staff.
- The quality of teaching and achievement is continually improving because of the skill, effort and determination of the leadership team, including the governing body, and the provision of good professional development. The school makes it a high priority to improve pupils' attendance, behaviour and literacy and it does this successfully.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the quality of teaching is good, there are some areas of inconsistency, particularly in teachers' use of questioning in lessons, and in the promotion of independence in learning.
- Pupils do not always have a clear understanding of their next steps in learning.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector, accompanied by a member of the school leadership team, visited 10 lessons led by nine of the school's teachers.
- Meetings were held with staff, parents and carers, as well as with officers from the local authority, members of the governing body and pupils.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at development plans, records of pupils' progress, arrangements for safeguarding and documentation on monitoring teachers' performance.
- The inspection took account of three responses to the online parent/carer questionnaire (Parent View), and 11 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Mick Megee, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school only admits boys.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, because of their social, behavioural and emotional difficulties.
- A very high proportion of the pupils are known to be eligible for support funded under the Pupil Premium initiative, and this is well above average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, making it of consistently high quality, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers make skilful use of questioning to make lessons more thought-provoking and dynamic, and to check that every pupil is engaged and keeping up with what is being discussed
 - all teachers use a variety of strategies in lessons so that pupils have the opportunity to become independent as learners and develop their own ideas about how to make progress
 - all classroom staff place greater emphasis on pupils' individual learning targets so that all pupils have a clear understanding of their next steps in learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils join the school with low skills in reading and numeracy, having had a fractured and negative experience of education, and many have not been in school for several years. By the time pupils leave, their attainment, although below average, has risen significantly.
- Pupils are supported well in school so that they again enjoy their learning and make good progress in all subjects, including literacy and numeracy. Parents and carers agree that their children make good progress. In lessons, there is good achievement, although inconsistencies in teaching occasionally hold a few pupils back.
- Progress is particularly strong in reading because of the school's high quality structured approach to teaching literacy. Progress is strong too in practical subjects such as art and physical education where there is expert specialist teaching.
- Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs, because of mental or physical health difficulties, for example, make good progress because they receive well-targeted, individual support in class and in withdrawal groups. The good quality support provided also enables pupils known to be eligible for the Pupil Premium to make similarly good progress.
- The school's tracking information and a sample of pupils' work show that pupils in Key Stage 4 make slightly faster progress than those in Key Stage 3, as they become increasingly settled and self-confident the longer they are at the school. The few pupils who continue to attend less regularly make slower progress than others.
- In Key Stage 4, pupils achieve well in an appropriate range of qualifications, such as GCSE, and obtain very useful vocational certificates, for example, for First Aid and Safety at Work.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Lesson observations, by both the inspector and the school's leadership team, show that teaching is good and promotes good progress. In the small groups and individual sessions activities are matched well to individual capabilities. Pupils enjoy lessons where teachers select activities and use a variety of methods that make learning fun.
- For example, in a lesson on scattergrams pupils collected data on the relationship between static strength and height by having pupils measure each other and then seeing how long they could hold a static pushup on the floor. Staff also underwent the test, which the boys greatly enjoyed. The activities engendered a very positive atmosphere for learning, on which the staff skilfully capitalised for the subsequent individual activity so that progress in this lesson was excellent.
- Teachers have high expectations for good achievement, and a good knowledge of their subjects. However, not all teachers are equally skilful in their use of questioning of pupils or in enabling pupils to develop as independent learners. For example, teachers may sometimes throw out questions for any pupil to answer, rather than to selected pupils who may have lost the thread of the lesson or have become disengaged. Sometimes teachers spend too long talking to the whole group of pupils, rather than allowing the pupils to explore their own paths to learning and develop their own strategies for success.
- Classroom staff use resources, including new technology, effectively to support learning in lessons. For example, pictures of a previous group's visit to a Tudor house in Southampton displayed on an interactive whiteboard helped pupils prepare for their own forthcoming visit.
- Staff and pupils enjoy caring, productive and positive relationships that encourage the regaining of self-confidence and resilience. There is effective teamwork in lessons between teachers and support staff that provides a good role model for what cooperation can achieve. Classroom staff give pupils plenty of opportunities to work together, although pupils who are new to the school are sometimes reluctant and resistant.
- The school has developed a very effective team of skilled and knowledgeable teaching assistants who make a positive contribution to the good achievement pupils make, irrespective

of their disabilities and special educational needs. The school develops these staff well and works to their strengths by allocating them significant areas of responsibility. For example, two teaching assistants very effectively organise the whole-school promotion of social and emotional skills aspects of learning.

- Staff assess pupils in each lesson, and this enables teachers to set challenging individual targets. Although verbal and written feedback to pupils is encouraging, they do not always have a clear understanding of their own learning targets because they are not emphasised sufficiently in lessons. Consequently, pupils are not always sure of the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school leaders and staff set a positive and respectful tone within the school, which is reflected in its calm and productive atmosphere. Pupils, parents, carers and staff are positive about the standards of behaviour in the school, which are typically good. This is a remarkable turnaround for pupils, many of whom have found it difficult in the past to manage their anger or control their feelings when upset.
- In lessons, because staff know the pupils well, they step in quickly should any difficulty arise. All staff receive high quality training in behaviour management, so that emerging incidents are defused quickly and the number of exclusions has reduced significantly over the last two years.
- Good attitudes and behaviour are recognised and celebrated as much as good achievement. Learning behaviour is tracked throughout the day and rewarded through a whole-school system that is used consistently by all staff.
- All of the pupils join the school with significant gaps in their education, and many of them have become low or even non-attenders. The school is very successful in improving attendance for almost all pupils. It assiduously follows up non-attendance and, together with the local authority in one or two serious cases, has followed this through to prosecution. However, there are still a few pupils who remain resistant to regular attendance despite the school's best efforts and attendance as a whole, though constantly improving, is below average.
- Pupils, parents and carers say that pupils feel safe and that adults look after them well. Bullying and racist remarks do occasionally surface but staff take effective action on the spot. Pupils are aware of different kinds of bullying, including homophobic and cyber bullying, and know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders are committed, enthusiastic and focus well on continual improvement and on doing the very best for the pupils both personally and academically.
- The school has a good understanding of what it needs to do to improve. Detailed action plans to address school priorities show clearly the school's ambition and striving for excellence. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well by successfully narrowing any identified achievement gaps and by participation in events such as Black History Week.
- The leaders skilfully manage the performance of classroom staff and provide an effective programme for training that continues to improve the quality of teaching as well as the learning experiences for the pupils. There is regular, helpful and focused monitoring of lessons and clear guidance, to teachers on how they can improve their practice. However, a few teachers have yet to become consistently skilful in carrying out some aspects of their work.
- The school has in place good systems for tracking pupils' progress and convenes frequent formal meetings on pupils' progress, as well as daily informal debriefing sessions for all staff so that pupils are supported and encouraged throughout the week. The school is currently improving these systems so that they become more user-friendly for staff and governors.
- The leadership team has benefited from, and values the good support provided by the local authority in terms of curriculum and staffing support. However, there has been a significant reduction in the support given to the school by the local authority for improving attendance.

- The school fully meets requirements in respect of the safeguarding of pupils. The school carries out the necessary checks on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and all staff have received the appropriate level of training. Staff are vigilant and provide a high level of care for the children.
 - The school maintains good links with all the relevant external agencies and provides well for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, for example, pupils with physical or mental health difficulties.
 - The leaders successfully provide a relevant, accessible and enjoyable curriculum that promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The curriculum is enhanced by residential trips abroad for skiing and visiting battlefields in Belgium, camping in the New Forest and visits to the local football club for matches and stadium tours.
- **The governance of the school:**
- is good. The governing body is effectively led and managed, and there is a wide range of skills and experience among its members. They are very committed to helping the school and provide timely support and a good level of challenge for school leaders. The members understand well the strengths and areas for improvement of the school through their programme of regular visits.

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	116624
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	401607

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Clark
Headteacher	Anne Hendon-John
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 November 2009
Telephone number	02380 636776
Fax number	02380 336066
Email address	head@polygon.southampton.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

