

The Harbour School

Station Road, Wilburton, Ely, CB6 3RR

Inspection dates

27–28 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 headteacher's passionate commitment to providing the best opportunities for all pupils has led to a dramatic improvement in the quality of education the school provides.
- Her hard work, and that of the dedicated staff, has created an environment where pupils feel very safe and secure, and can flourish.
- Staff see opportunities, not problems, in the pupils' difficulties. They discover their talents and help put them on the right path to success.
- The excellent quality of teaching promotes exceptional progress. Staff have very high expectations and the boys respond accordingly. Just occasionally, marking does not show pupils exactly how well they are doing, or how to improve their work.
- Many pupils are able to return to mainstream schools, and those who stay at Harbour School continue to make considerable strides within the nurturing environment.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons, so they typically behave exceptionally well and are keen to learn.
- Staff manage behaviour very well, so any pupils who may find it difficult to behave well do not hold up the lesson for others. The boys treat their school with respect. They are rightly proud of it and say, 'It's the best.'
- Parents are full of praise for what the school has done for their child and how this has helped their family. As one said, 'I can't believe the difference.'
- Staff work very closely with residential colleagues so that boarding pupils make even better progress, in their social and emotional skills as well as their school work.
- Governors understand what the school needs to do to continue being successful, and they make sure money is used wisely so that it has the best facilities they can afford.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, nine of which were seen together with senior staff. They visited breaks and lunchtimes as well as looking at pupils' work and how it is marked.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, senior teachers, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, staff responsible for child protection, and the child and adolescent psychotherapist.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to give any information. However, inspectors spoke to one parent in person and three by telephone. They took account of the school's own surveys of the views of parents and pupils, as well as questionnaires filled in by staff.
- Inspectors examined school policies, governing body reports, information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance, and records of staff performance.

Inspection team

Debra McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Harbour is a special school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs. Many join at different points during their school life, having had a disrupted education in their previous schools. Over half have additional needs such as moderate learning difficulties or attention deficit disorders, and a small number have autistic spectrum disorders.
- The school has residential provision for 17 pupils who board from Monday to Friday during term time. The boarding provision was inspected separately in December 2012 and the report can be found on the Ofsted website.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. They attend from across Cambridgeshire. The very small number of pupils in Key Stage 1 have only recently joined the school.
- Some pupils attend Witchford Village College, City of Ely School and Swavesey Village College as part of a reintegration programme into mainstream education.
- A very high number of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. This is extra government funding for particular groups of pupils. In this school the funding currently applies only to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- All pupils are from a White British Background and speak English as their first language.
- The headteacher is also a consultant headteacher for two days a week at a similar special school in a different local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review the way teachers mark pupils' work, so their comments always shows pupils exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Because of their special educational needs and often disrupted education, pupils start at the school working well below national expectations for their age. However, whatever their starting points they rapidly begin to make outstanding progress compared to similar pupils nationally.
- Staff are extremely skilled at finding the best ways for pupils to learn. They work on pupils' strengths and help them build on their successes. This means boys who have attention deficit or autism spectrum disorders make progress as rapidly as their classmates. Pupils who have moderate learning difficulties have work that is tailored specially for them.
- Boarders make especially impressive progress because of the strong partnership between the school and the boarding provision.
- Key Stage 2 pupils make excellent progress. Subjects for younger pupils are taught through exploring different themes, which makes learning more interesting. Pupils are able to make links between lessons to help them understand topics in more depth. Topic-based teaching has been partially introduced in science in Key Stage 3. Its impact can already be seen in pupils' even greater involvement in lessons.
- Many pupils in Key Stage 3 do so well that they are ready to begin part-time reintegration into mainstream education. A number leave after Year 11 to attend local colleges on a full-time basis for GCSE courses. Those remaining leave with B Tech or Entry Level qualifications in a range of subjects.
- The progress made by a very few pupils in Key Stage 4 was disrupted during a period of turbulence leading up to the appointment of a permanent headteacher. However, their time at The Harbour has been very well spent overall, and the introduction of different courses is ensuring that they are now catching up quickly.
- The strong emphasis on the teaching of reading across the school has had a considerable impact on pupils' literacy skills. Staff and pupils read widely and their latest book reviews are displayed around the school. Good use of information and communication technology helps pupils to develop their presentation skills.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and this year some are able to take a GCSE course at The Harbour. Pupils in the 'Business Class', who find more formal lessons difficult, learn about financial planning through setting up their own car washing business to raise money for an end-of-term trip.
- The majority of the school's pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. They are enabled to achieve as well as their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. The pupil premium has provided extra classroom support, particularly for one-to-one reading and for the Business Class. This has successfully kept pupils in school who had been in danger of failing because of their particular behavioural difficulties.
- Work experience opportunities for older pupils are organised well. They are able to attend a range of placements with local businesses.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Senior leaders regularly check how well teachers are doing, and act swiftly if necessary so that teaching is always good or better. This has led to a consistently high standard of teaching throughout the school.
- The staff are adept at making sure pupils learn the social, emotional and behavioural skills to make the best of their time in school. The child psychotherapist works very closely with class teams to offer highly skilled help for individuals.
- The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was often outstanding. Lessons are well planned and excellent use is made of time. Activities are perfectly matched to pupils' abilities.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to join in. 'I didn't want to stop!' exclaimed one excited pupil in a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson. Excellent relationships are a key to the school's success.
- The school's work on increasing the amount of one-to-one teaching for pupils who struggle with reading has made a huge difference to how well they have done.
- Pupils learn how to work happily alongside each other, even though they might find this hard. In one lesson a group of pupils used a picture of a sunset to think about how it made them feel. They worked really well together, sharing ideas and writing them down on the same piece of paper.
- Teachers mostly use questioning extremely well to check how much pupils have learnt and to decide what to teach next. The best marking in pupils' books makes very clear what they need to do to improve. On a very few occasions this is not so clear and is less helpful.
- Teaching assistants are used very well to make sure lessons run smoothly. They provide highly skilled support for teachers by helping pupils to complete their work, giving just the right amount of help to ensure that pupils do not come to rely too much on their support.
- Teachers frequently check how well the boys are doing. This means they know whether to make the work easier or harder to help them do their best. The new computer system gives a very clear picture of pupils' progress for parents, teachers and the headteacher. They know it is accurate because they share the information with other similar schools so that they can make comparisons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exceptional considering their social, emotional and behavioural needs. Very well thought out strategies for managing difficult behaviour mean that pupils feel safe and lessons can continue uninterrupted.
- Pupils are fully involved in this. They learn how to help control their own behaviour and how important this is for when they leave school. The way the 'family team' works together to support pupils and their families plays a major part in making sure these improvements are sustained over the long term.
- Exclusions have reduced dramatically. Attendance has increased with a number of boys attaining 100%. If a pupil's attendance drops, the school has rigorous procedures for finding out why, so

that any problems can be sorted out.

- The behaviour of a number of the older pupils improves so much they are able to attend local mainstream schools and colleges. Last year this accounted for half the Year 11 class.
- The school day is very well organised so pupils have enough time and space to learn how to work and play harmoniously together. Lunch is now a friendly, social occasion and a chance to catch up with classmates and staff, while play times are an opportunity to relax or take part in team games.
- Because the school is small, staff know pupils really well and can tell if something is wrong. Pupils build up strong, trusting relationships with adults so they are confident they will give them the help they need. Procedures for making sure pupils are kept safe are very thorough and there is always someone available to follow up any problems.
- The school ensures that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated, and all pupils are given an equal chance to succeed. Lessons include learning about the diverse world pupils live in and the importance of accepting each other's differences. Pupils feel safe in school, confident that any bullying will be dealt with thoroughly.
- Lessons and assemblies are used effectively to help the boys learn how to keep themselves safe, as well as respect one another. They learn how to be careful on the internet, about the dangers of drug abuse, and how to cope with the changes that come with adolescence.
- Older pupils can take BTech qualifications in personal and social development. This helps them when they take part in work placements or driving experiences with a local driving school. Younger pupils learn about 'stranger danger'.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school's turbulent past due to the lack of consistent leadership is now well and truly over. The headteacher's continual pursuit of excellence has paid dividends and everyone acknowledges how much things have improved.
- The headteacher's work is so well regarded that she is also a consultant headteacher at a special school in another authority. For two days a week she is able to confidently leave the school in the capable hands of senior leaders. She makes sure teaching is the best it can be. Mediocrity is not tolerated.
- Staff and parents are fully behind senior leaders. Parents know exactly what is happening in school, and the relationships between home and school are excellent.
- Considerable hard work and planning goes into deciding what to teach. Senior leaders use information about pupils' progress very well to make sure lessons are interesting and practical, so they will help the boys when they leave school. Pupil premium funding is used creatively to give eligible pupils the opportunity to make the best use of their time in school and to catch up with their classmates.
- Staff are first-class role models for pupils. They make sure a strong moral code is at the heart of everything they do and stress the importance of behaving in a way that is socially acceptable in the wider world. There are opportunities for spiritual reflection in tutor time and assemblies.

- Pupils enjoy a wide range of sporting and cultural opportunities both in school and beyond, including inter-school football games, motorbike scrambling and action-packed residential holidays. They learn about other cultures through visiting speakers, Diversity Days and links with schools abroad.

- The school benefits from effective support from the local authority, particularly in its work to further improve teaching.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has steadfastly supported the headteacher's drive to move the school forward at a rapid rate. The governors have been meticulous in ensuring she has had sufficient funds to bring about the necessary changes, and their financial planning has been rigorous. They are very well informed about the work of the school through regular visits and reports from the headteacher, and know how well pupils are doing compared to those in other similar schools. They have a good awareness of the quality of teaching and have attended training so that they understand the link between teachers' performance and their pay. They are also fully aware of the impact pupil premium funding has on the achievement of eligible pupils. They make sure that the school fully meets national requirements for safeguarding children.

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	134193
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	408929

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Thompson
Headteacher	Mary Rayner
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2011
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