

The Harbour School

Station Road, Wilburton, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 3RR

Inspection dates

6–7 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have been unable to build on the improvements that led to the school being judged outstanding at its last inspection.
- Significant changes in leadership and reorganisation have weakened the school's effectiveness.
- During this turbulent period, pupils' behaviour deteriorated, the quality of teaching declined and most pupils underachieved.
- Teaching is inconsistent. Expectations of pupils are too low. Pupils over-rely on staff to help them complete work. In some lessons, teachers fail to spark pupils' interest.
- Some senior and middle leaders are new and remain unproven. Some subjects, including mathematics, do not have leaders to monitor and drive improvements.
- Behaviour is not managed consistently. Some pupils leave lessons without permission.
- 'The bridge', used to manage the most challenging behaviour, is too austere and does little to modify pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Until recently, pupils' learning and progress have not been assessed systematically.
- Disadvantaged pupils underachieve. Regular checks are not made of the use of additional funding to raise their achievement.
- The curriculum is not planned well enough in key stages 3 and 4. Pupils' reading and writing, and phonics skills, are underdeveloped.
- Not all teaching assistants are deployed well enough to aid pupils' learning and progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher provides coherent and effective leadership and is ably supported by her new team of leaders. Pupils' behaviour, attendance and progress are steadily improving.
- Relations are very strong. The tolerance and patience shown by staff is valued by pupils.
- Assessment is becoming more systematic.
- Pupils in key stage 4 feel that the college placements made for them are helping to raise their achievement and aspirations.
- Governors know the school well. They provide effective support and challenge for school leaders.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so it is much more consistent throughout all key stages, by:
 - checking that lessons provide pupils with activities that capture and retain their interest
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of pupils' conduct and what they are capable of achieving are always high enough
 - providing pupils of different abilities and interests with sufficiently challenging work
 - deploying teaching assistants effectively to teach pupils and support their learning
 - providing time for pupils to work by themselves and with others without needing the direct support of staff
 - checking that newly introduced procedures to assess pupils' learning and progress are carried out systematically.
- Improve behaviour and attendance further, by:
 - implementing the school's revised policy and procedures for managing behaviour promptly, in 2017, and evaluating mid-way through the spring term the impact this has had on improving the behaviour of all pupils
 - refurbishing and reorganising 'the bridge' facility, so that it becomes a much more effective means of modifying pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards learning
 - embedding the current procedures used to reduce the persistent absence of a small minority of pupils.
- Raise achievement, by:
 - ensuring that new senior leaders establish themselves quickly and make a full contribution to improving outcomes for pupils
 - providing newly appointed leaders of literacy and numeracy with the training and support they need to ensure that all pupils, but especially those in key stage 3, acquire basic skills
 - using the information gained from teachers' routine assessment of pupils' learning and progress to identify early those at risk of underachieving
 - revising the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 so that it is interesting and relevant, and that it enables pupils to gain the essential skills needed for further training or employment
 - monitoring the progress made by disadvantaged pupils much more closely
 - ensuring that governors monitor the impact of pupil premium funding on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of the leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Following the last inspection, significant changes in leadership and staffing led to a long period of instability. This resulted in a rapid decline in pupils' conduct, and led to increased use of physical intervention to manage the most challenging behaviour.
- Staff felt unsafe and raised their concerns with the local authority, and with Ofsted. Regular staff absence led to an over-reliance on temporary staff. This unsettled pupils and contributed further to their poor attitudes and behaviour.
- Changes in leadership reduced the school's overall capacity to improve. The departure of key staff left gaps in the leadership and management of key areas, particularly in core subjects. Insufficient attention has been paid to the quality of the curriculum, especially in key stages 3 and 4. Until recently, older pupils have not had suitable opportunities to acquire basic skills and gain the qualifications they need for the next stage of their lives.
- The current headteacher took up her post in 2016. Much of her time was absorbed in managing change following the local authority's decision to close the school's residential provision, and reorganising her staff. This has prevented her from tackling some of the weaknesses she inherited and dealing with some organisational matters. For example, several of the required documents about the school's work are not available on its website.
- The headteacher's clear, coherent leadership has stabilised the school. Responses to Ofsted's questionnaire confirmed that the vast majority of staff support her aims for the school and feel that it is well managed. Her self-evaluation and improvement planning rightly prioritises gaining greater consistency in how all staff manage pupils' behaviour. A revised policy and procedures are being prepared ready for implementation next term.
- Appointing new leaders and reorganising the leadership team have added further capacity to make improvements. These leaders are expected to establish themselves quickly and contribute fully to improving outcomes for pupils. Their improved monitoring has identified where the strengths and weaknesses lie in teaching. Revised procedures are in place to manage the performance of teachers, and to follow up staff absence. Training for staff to improve their teaching is under way.
- The lack of accurate assessment data means that leaders are unable to show how well disadvantaged pupils progress, and the difference that pupil premium funding makes to their overall achievement. Recent tests carried out to determine pupils' current levels of ability now provide staff with a clear baseline to assess pupils' progress.
- Additional funding is used effectively to support a small proportion of pupils who are looked after by the local authority. Pupils are provided with additional one-to-one support to monitor their progress and welfare. Leaders ensure that they have the equipment they need to aid their learning, and are fully included in enrichment activities and off-site visits.
- The curriculum for key stages 1 and 2 provides pupils with a wide range of stimulating activities and topic-based learning. This is enhanced by learning outdoors in forest

schools, regular swimming and outdoor play. The curriculum for key stages 3 and 4 is not well planned. Time for learning in core subjects is minimal. In other subjects, tasks and activities fail to inspire and engage pupils.

- This term, a leader took responsibility for managing the teaching of literacy and raising the profile of reading and writing throughout the school. This area of the school's work requires significant further development. Many pupils in key stage 3 are unable to read and write well enough, and this hinders their progress.
- A member of staff has recently been appointed to lead improvements to mathematics, but this remains a key weakness in key stages 3 and 4. The amount of time allocated each week to mathematics and English is minimal. Inspectors found very few examples of how staff reinforce pupils' numeracy skills in other lessons.
- Established partnerships with the local authority are adding to the school's capacity to improve. Senior leaders value the weekly advisory support to develop the quality of teaching. Regular meetings to monitor the school's improvement plans provide leaders with a regular external evaluation of the impact of their work. The local authority acknowledges that this intensive monitoring needs to be less frequent in order to give the headteacher more time to do her day-to-day duties and meet with pupils.
- Leaders maintain regular contact with parents and carers. They recognise that these links are key to ensuring that pupils settle quickly and remain in learning. Two of the three parents who shared their views with inspectors praised the work of staff in helping their child to integrate into school life.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has increased its monitoring of the school's work. Minutes of meetings show that governors fully support the actions of the headteacher and ask challenging questions about the school's development.
- Discussions with inspectors confirmed that governors know what the school does well and what needs improving. They rightly feel that, 'the school is on a journey, and that the headteacher is providing it with a clear purpose'.
- The governing body does not monitor the use of the pupil premium, or champion the progress and welfare of disadvantaged pupils.
- A governor checks that safeguarding arrangements including the single central record remain secure.
- The governing body meets regularly with the local authority to monitor the school's improvement and review the actions taken to reduce the school's budget deficit.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All required checks are carried out when recruiting new staff to work with children.
- The headteacher and three other staff work as a team to keep pupils safe. All of them are suitably trained in child protection.
- The safeguarding team includes the school's education social worker. He maintains firm

links between school and families, and with the carers of children looked after, by making periodic visits to their homes.

- Accurate records are maintained of disclosures and concerns raised. Good relations have been forged with local support agencies to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils are taught how to keep safe, including when using social media. The school's policy to hand in phones on arrival helps to maintain their safety.
- Risk assessments are carried out for off-site visits.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Monitoring of teaching led by the headteacher and local authority advisers shows that teaching is improving. A detailed programme of staff training and leaders' monitoring is under way to improve this further. Senior leaders' observations, and those carried out by inspectors confirm this improvement, but also that teaching remains too inconsistent. For example, inspectors found some of the most effective and least effective teaching in key stage 2.
- Reading records show that pupils in key stage 2 read almost every day and receive good feedback from staff about their reading. Recent training has strengthened the teaching of phonics but this remains underdeveloped. Not all staff make clear to pupils the different sounds that letters make.
- Effective teaching is undermined by the poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils which is not managed consistently. Staff are adept at coaxing and cajoling pupils to complete their work. However, learning is often negotiated with pupils, on their terms, which leads to them doing a minimal amount of work. More than half of the staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire felt that behaviour is not managed consistently, indicating that some staff do not take full responsibility for dealing with incidents when they arise.
- In key stage 3, pupils do not do enough reading or writing. Staff rely on worksheets requiring one-word answers or short statements. Pupils' spelling, grammar and poor handwriting are not always corrected in teachers' marking. Some teachers fail to capture pupils' interest at the start of lessons, and this leads to a lack of engagement in learning.
- Staff provide good one-to-one support but some pupils become overly dependent on it. When staff move on to help another learner, some pupils ease off or give up too easily. Inspectors noted very few opportunities for pupils to work by themselves, or with others, without the direct support of staff.
- Staff absence and the use of temporary staff lead to some instability and further inconsistencies in teaching. Older pupils do not like these regular changes in staffing, as this unsettles them and does not help them to learn well. Some temporary teaching assistants are unclear about the expectations of them, and how they should work alongside teachers. They fulfil supervisory roles rather than helping pupils to learn.
- Pupils engage readily in forest schools and enjoy learning outside. Practical, hands-on activities capture their interest. Good instruction coupled with lots of praise help to build pupils' resilience when they find tasks challenging.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' attendance is low, leading to reduced opportunities for their personal development to flourish as well as it should.
- Leaders' actions to tackle persistent absence are leading to improvement, and attendance is rising. School data shows an upward trend in attendance in the past two years. Leaders can point to good examples of pupils who due to their difficult backgrounds have missed long periods of their education prior to joining the school, but now attend regularly.
- Pupils who met with inspectors were polite, well-mannered and good ambassadors for their school.
- They said they feel quite safe. They know about different types of bullying and feel that it rarely happens in school. If it does, they have confidence in staff to sort it out for them. Staff questionnaires confirmed that staff make sure that school is a safe place for pupils to be.
- A nurture unit, set up this year, provides a safe haven for some of the school's most vulnerable pupils. Pupils are taught together by the same staff who know individual pupils' needs well. Catch-up funding is used effectively to support their learning. Regular assessments of their progress show that these pupils make good gains in their social and emotional development.
- Pupils show some understanding of fundamental British values. Weekly personal, social health and economic education, including advice on careers, provides them with opportunities to discuss topical issues such as the risks of extremism and radicalisation. Pupils consider the views of others from different backgrounds and beliefs. This, and a range of enrichment activities, adds significantly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils join the school with severe emotional and mental health needs. Some display very challenging behaviour. Staff forge good relations with them. They are expert in calming pupils, focusing their attention and preparing them for learning. However, at times this is undermined by pupils' poor behaviour that is not managed consistently.
- In lessons, not all staff make it clear to pupils what their expectations of them are. For example, pupils are not asked to remove their coats in classrooms ready to begin learning. Some of them take too long to settle into learning, or are allowed to wander around classrooms.

- At lunchtimes, pupils eat and socialise together well. Pupils are generally friendly towards each other. Younger pupils play safely together outside, or take part in dodgeball. Older pupils mix well and use the school's computers to play games.
- Support staff are 'on-call' to deal with incidents off the most challenging behaviour. When issues occur, pupils are escorted to 'the bridge', where they are closely supervised. Staff are experts in using calming techniques, humour, and distraction to de-escalate these situations.
- However, records show that this austere environment does little to modify pupils' poor behaviour. There are no interventions or strategies used within 'the bridge' to determine the causes of individual pupils' challenging behaviour, or what could be done to prevent it from happening again.
- The use of physical intervention to restrain pupils at risk of harm, or harming others, is recorded systematically in bound books for each year group. Records show a sharp decline in the use of physical interventions this year. Procedures to manage these situations are more systematic now. Staff use of the school's restorative approach is successful in encouraging pupils to consider their actions and share their views with others.
- Leaders acknowledge that further work is needed to gain consistency in managing behaviour. All staff have contributed to an agreed policy and the procedures to follow. Plans are in place to implement this fully next term.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The turbulence experienced since the last inspection had a detrimental effect on the overall achievement of pupils. Results attained over the past two years are low. Due to the school's small size, very small numbers of pupils sit tests or examinations. The school assessment information for these pupils shows widespread underachievement.
- Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, underachieve. The majority of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. Funding is used to provide additional staff to support all learners. This has contributed effectively to the management of their behaviour. It has had little impact on raising their achievement. The full impact of this support is unclear because the progress of disadvantaged pupils is not monitored discretely.
- The additional capacity provided by an enlarged senior leadership team has identified the causes of this underachievement and the actions needed to secure better outcomes for pupils. Improvement plans prioritise raising achievement by removing inconsistencies in teaching and in managing behaviour.
- Staff prioritise getting pupils to settle into school promptly, and prepare them for learning. Pupils quickly gain in confidence. They develop social skills through their interaction with others that enable them to mix well and engage in learning.
- Weak assessment procedures have prevented leaders from identifying, at an early stage, those pupils at risk of underachieving. Newly introduced procedures provide a clearer indication of pupils' prior learning when they join the school. This information forms the basis of further assessments planned for later this term to illustrate individual pupils' progress over time. Much more time is needed for these procedures to become

fully established.

- Leaders' regular observations of pupils at work in lessons and scrutiny of their books confirm that currently, most are making improved progress. In key stage 2, the variable quality of teaching, and the impact this has on pupils' learning, is clearly evident in pupils' books. In mathematics, pupils are taught methods of calculation, problem-solving, and shape and time, but some tasks are too easy. In English, pupils use their imagination to write stories, complete comprehension and carry out basic research. Some of their literacy books contain good examples of extended writing.
- In key stages 3 and 4, pupils' outcomes are low because the curriculum is not planned well enough. Pupils have less than three hours of English and mathematics each week, so their literacy and numeracy skills remain underdeveloped. This presents a significant barrier to pupils' learning and progress.
- Pupils in key stage 4 talked enthusiastically with inspectors about the time they spend at college each week, and the support provided by teaching assistants to help them settle into college life. Pupils study a range of GCSE, entry level and vocational awards. This is helping to raise their aspirations and provide a clear pathway to the next stage of their education and training.
- Pupils also said that they make less progress in school because some tasks are too easy, and do not challenge them fully. For example, they have noticed the higher expectations of them in English taught at college, compared to the work they do in school.
- School records show that most pupils who leave school at the end of Year 11 go on to college placements to continue their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	134193
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10012520

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracie Linehan
Headteacher	Debra Smith
Telephone number	01353 740229
Website	www.theharbourschool.co.uk
Email address	office@harbour.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about its policies for managing behaviour, charging and remissions, special educational needs, statements about the curriculum and the use of the pupil premium and catch-up funding.
- The Harbour is a special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many join at different stages of their lives, having had a disrupted education in their previous schools. A small proportion of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school caters mainly for pupils in key stages 2, 3 and 4. A very small number of pupils in key stage 1 join the school's 'minnows' class.

- Pupils come from all over Cambridgeshire. Most are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium.
- The school makes arrangements with Cambridge Regional College to educate off-site a small proportion of key stage 4 pupils.
- The new headteacher took up her post in January 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in seven lessons, most of which were visited jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors walked around the school with senior staff, visiting all classrooms and facilities to observe pupils at work and gauge the quality of their behaviour. Inspectors also visited 'the bridge', the school's facility for managing pupils displaying the most challenging behaviour.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, two members of the governing body, a group of pupils and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at safeguarding and the child protection policy and procedures, risk assessments, self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of pupils' attendance and behaviour, and other information provided by senior leaders.
- In particular, they looked at the actions taken by leaders since the last inspection to stabilise the school, how effectively pupils' behaviour is managed and the extent to which pupils are prepared for the next stage of their training or employment.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and three free texts from parents. They considered 28 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Linda Bartlett

Ofsted Inspector

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