

Inspection of Harwich and Dovercourt High School

Hall Lane, Harwich, Essex CO12 3TG

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 September 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and well looked after. Whether in the classroom or on the playground, the school is a safe and friendly place to be. Pupils get on with each other. They behave well. They respect how some people may be different from themselves. Bullying does not happen often. If it does, staff quickly sort out the problem. In most cases, it does not happen again.

Pupils benefit from the school being a 'reading school'. They told inspectors about the many different books they enjoy reading. Across the curriculum, there are many opportunities for pupils to read challenging texts. As a result, pupils use a wide range of vocabulary.

Pupils value the personal, social and health education (PSHE) course which is delivered through the school's curriculum. The course helps pupils develop their understanding of the world around them. Pupils are taught to make responsible decisions to keep safe and develop healthy relationships with others.

Students who stay on in the small sixth form are well supported. They access a range of courses that are suited to their needs.

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

There is a collective purpose among all staff to make the school the best it can be. Leaders are moving forward in their vision to 'work together, read together, learn together'. Recent curriculum changes are making a difference to pupils' learning. Leaders know this is not the end of the journey and are clear where there is more work to do.

Leaders have thought carefully about how their plans build pupils' knowledge over time. In mathematics, for example, curriculum plans introduce new learning step by step. As a result, pupils have the knowledge to solve tricky mathematics problems. Leaders have ensured strong curriculum planning is an inherent feature of the school.

There are occasional exceptions. Sometimes plans for older pupils are not as rigorous or as well thought through as the rest of the curriculum. They lack the sequencing which ensures pupils learn as well as they could.

Teachers know their subjects well. They use in-class checks to see if pupils understand an idea. Where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge, teachers help pupils catch up. Teachers give plenty of practice to help pupils get better in a subject. In art, for instance, pupils regularly revisit and practise applying their painting and drawing knowledge through a range of different activities and mediums.

Leaders accurately identify and review the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In most lessons, pupils with SEND achieve well. A small number of pupils with SEND find learning difficult because teachers do not always use the right technique or approach that will help them with their learning. These pupils fall behind in their learning.

There is a focus on reading through the 'reading school' initiative. Leaders support pupils that find reading difficult effectively. These pupils are carefully monitored and given appropriate help to boost their reading knowledge. Many go on to read the same challenging books as their friends.

Pupils' behaviour is well managed by leaders and staff. Staff generally implement the school's behaviour policy well. The curriculum and achievement support academy (CASA) supports pupils effectively to remain in school and reintegrate back into lessons when ready. Staff in the CASA are effective in helping pupils to take responsibility for, and improve, their behaviour.

In the wider curriculum and through PSHE, pupils experience a well-developed programme of lessons that teach them about the importance of being good citizens. Trips and visits are designed to take pupils to places they may not usually go to, such as the Year 7 London trip and Year 10 trip to Auschwitz.

Leaders ensure pupils in all year groups access a wide range of vocational and academic subjects and qualifications. Pupils are given clear support to pick the right course for them. There are now more pupils choosing to study a modern foreign language. Consequently, the number of pupils who study subjects in the English Baccalaureate is increasing.

There is an effective careers curriculum. Pupils from Year 8 to the sixth form are given clear, independent careers advice and guidance. The school ensures pupils know about the wide range of next step options available in the local area, including their own sixth form. After leaving the school, very few pupils are not in education, employment or training.

Leaders and governors value their staff and are considerate of workload. The trust ensures that staff, at all levels, access suitable professional development to improve the school further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture. Leaders are acutely aware of the risks to pupils, including those in the local area. An understanding of these risks is shared with pupils in an age-appropriate manner.

All staff are appropriately trained and vigilant in spotting if a pupil is at risk of harm. There is a clear system for reporting safeguarding concerns to leaders.

Concerns about pupils are recorded accurately and dealt with in a timely manner. A range of organisations are used to support the school in ensuring pupils are safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, curriculum plans are not as effective as they should be for older pupils. As a result, older pupils struggle to remember some key knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that all curriculum plans are well sequenced for all year groups.
- Some teachers do not make appropriate adaptations when supporting pupils with SEND. Consequently, some pupils with SEND make slower progress through the curriculum than others. Leaders need to ensure teachers have the right training and information so that pupils with SEND achieve as well as their peers.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	145061
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10200548
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1129
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	96
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nicholas Pavitt
Headteacher	Kate Finch
Website	www.hdhs.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Harwich and Dovercourt High School converted to become an academy in June 2017. When its predecessor school, Harwich and Dovercourt High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Sigma Trust.
- The headteacher has been in place since February 2018.
- While the school has its own sixth-form provision, some lessons are shared with other schools in the Sigma Trust.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. The school uses four providers: North East Essex Co-operative Academy (NEECA), Colchester Institute, CTP Training and TLG Tendring.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with leaders. They held meetings with the special educational needs coordinator, governors and trustees (including the chair of the Sigma Trust).
- Inspectors explored safeguarding through a range of activities, including viewing safeguarding records, meeting with pupils and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors considered the 79 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 45 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the 48 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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