

Inspection of an outstanding school: Mary Rose Academy

Gisors Road, Southsea, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO4 8GT

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2021

Outcome

Mary Rose Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a kind and caring school. Pupils feel happy, safe and secure. They form exceptionally trusting relationships with staff. Each morning, when they start their day, pupils are delighted to greet their friends. Behaviour is exceptional. The school deals well with any incidents of bullying.

This school excels in meeting pupils' differing needs. As one parent said, 'Mary Rose have correctly identified my child's needs and they fulfil them with great sensitivity.' Those pupils who have difficulty regulating their emotions are taught to recognise the triggers that cause their anxieties. They are helped to calmly carry on with their work. Those pupils who need to develop their communication skills are gently supported to find an approach that works for them. By using signs, symbols or equipment, pupils learn to make choices about the activities they want to engage in. This reduces their sense of isolation and helps them to flourish.

There are the highest expectations for pupils. Staff are committed to developing pupils' independence. They prepare pupils exceptionally well for their future lives. All pupils who have left the school in the last few years have moved on to college or another specialist provision.

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

The quality of education is exceptionally high. Dedicated staff provide an ambitious and well-designed curriculum. In lessons, staff provide learning opportunities that are bespoke to each pupil's needs. Teachers assess in great detail what a pupil needs to learn next. This means that, across the curriculum, pupils develop their learning in a methodical, step-by-step way.

Leaders often refer to academic research to ensure that they are providing the best quality of education. Some staff have also contributed to research, such as in pre-reading. Because of this focus on excellent practice, pupils quickly learn to develop their pre-

reading skills. Some pupils go on to gain further skills and become confident readers. Staff are experts in using a range of techniques to ensure that all pupils engage well with stories.

Staff work together well. They ensure that each pupil's education, health and care needs are well met. Those pupils with autism spectrum disorder, who have difficulty in regulating their emotions, are gently helped to become less anxious. Well-trained staff teach pupils to lengthen their attention spans. The highly professional therapeutic team carefully supports pupils' physical, communication and emotional needs. Staff are experts in helping those pupils who have difficulty in processing information from their senses. All pupils make good use of the school's large swimming pool.

Behaviour is excellent. Lessons proceed calmly and quietly. Around the school, even the youngest pupils learn to take turns and treat each other with respect. Assemblies and other communal occasions, such as lunchtimes, run very smoothly.

Leaders are aspirational. They succeed in their vision to empower pupils within and beyond the Mary Rose community. A parent said that staff 'do everything they possibly can for our child and give them the best experience of school life'.

Every pupil is very well prepared for their future. Careers education is exceptional. For much of the week, older pupils, including those who are post-16, learn 'hands-on' skills by running a company. Pupils work with others to design, produce and sell a product, such as greetings cards or pottery. Some pupils run a very popular in-school café and cook tasty meals at lunchtimes. These experiences give pupils confidence and a range of useful skills for their future lives. Transitions after a pupil has left, either to college or other placements, are managed sensitively. Each leaver is tracked for five years to ensure that pupils get the right help and support as they embark on the next stage of their lives.

The school is a specialist sports college. The impressive range of sports on offer helps pupils to develop their stamina, coordination and spatial awareness. Water sports, such as kayaking and paddleboarding, are very popular. These activities help with developing upper body strength. Regular sports festivals help to develop pupils' sense of camaraderie and team spirit.

Pupils' personal development is very well catered for. Leaders ensure that pupils enjoy a range of interesting and exciting experiences. Day and residential trips help to develop pupils' social skills and independence. Pupils enjoy having a say on how their school is run through the school council. The recently launched school council for younger pupils, called Squeak, is also very successful. A range of cultural opportunities is provided through music, art and dance. Pupils work with a local multimedia artist who helps to choreograph their entry to a local dance competition. This provides opportunities for pupils to develop their self-confidence and builds skills such as communication and cooperation.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding embedded across the school. Staff are alert to each pupil's needs. They quickly spot any sign that suggests a pupil may be suffering from harm or neglect. Staff know the right procedures to follow to make sure that pupils are kept safe. Recruitment procedures are well managed.

Pupils learn about safeguarding risks, such as keeping safe when online or how to stay safe when outside school. There is close working with a range of external agencies, including social services and health professionals.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Mary Rose School, to be outstanding in October 2013.

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	140325
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10200276
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	177
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Mitchell
Principal	Faye Watton-Lawrence
Website	www.maryrose-academy.net
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Mary Rose Academy provides education for pupils with severe learning or profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are some pupils with autism spectrum disorder. The school caters for pupils aged between two and 19. All have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has opened two additional sites. The Lantern (PO1 5FE) is for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, and Craneswater (PO4 0PX) is for post-16 students.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Mary Rose Academy is part of the Solent Academies Trust, which consists of this school and three other schools.

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