

Inspection of Harlow Academy

Nottingham Road, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 5BA

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 January 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are not safe in this school. Staff do their best to care and provide for the complex needs of pupils. But there are not enough staff to make sure that all pupils are properly cared for. The lack of staff leaves pupils at imminent risk of harm.

Some pupils are happy to come to school. However, some pupils' basic needs are unmet. They communicate their distress. Some are neglected because staff are busy dealing with other pupils' urgent care needs.

Pupils do not receive an acceptable standard of education. They are not making the progress they should. Some parents and carers are worried that their children are falling further behind. Not all staff have had the right training to teach pupils well.

Many pupils behave well. They join in enthusiastically with activities staff provide. However, some pupils use undesirable behaviour to communicate their needs. They try to gain the attention they need using behaviour they know staff will have to respond to. When staff are able to respond, pupils settle quickly.

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

Leaders have not clearly defined what they expect pupils to learn on the different 'pathways' they follow. Staff have not received clear guidance about what they should teach, when, or how to teach. The majority of staff have not had the training or support they need to teach.

There is no clear curriculum in place. The activities that pupils do lack purpose. They do not build on pupils' prior knowledge, skills or understanding. The 'novel study' approach is poorly planned. For example, pupils melt wax in science because they are reading the book 'The Day the Crayons Quit'. However, leaders have not identified what pupils should learn from this activity.

Staff do not take pupils' education, health and care plans into account when they plan learning. Leaders have not ensured that staff know pupils' individual education targets. Staff do not know whether pupils are making progress.

In the majority of classes, staff are unable to help pupils learn. This is because they are too busy taking care of pupils' immediate care needs. Pupils are not learning as well as they should. Some parents feel that their children have fallen back in their learning and development.

Leaders introduced a new phonics scheme in September 2021. Staff have not had guidance or training in how to use the scheme to boost pupils' reading.

Pupils are not supported to manage their behaviour. The lack of supervision means that some pupils' behaviour is unsafe to themselves and others. Some staff have not had the training they need to manage pupils' behaviour. Staff do not record serious

incidents accurately. Senior leaders have failed to recognise and record all incidents of inappropriate restraint.

Leaders have not prioritised pupils' personal development. Two thirds of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's survey do not believe that the school supports their children's wider development. Through the 'Harlow Pledge', leaders have introduced live experiences for pupils, such as the recent pantomime. But the lack of staff means that pupils' everyday experiences are poor. For example, some pupils are not able to go outside at lunchtime as staff cannot supervise them safely.

There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop important life skills. They learn about issues like friendship, feelings and emotions when these appear in the books they study. Pupils miss out on important knowledge that will help prepare them for life in modern Britain. Students in the sixth form have not received any careers information. Leaders have developed an independent living area for these learners, but this is not yet in use.

Many experienced staff have left the school in recent months. Leaders have not replaced them. Senior leaders from the trust have not heeded concerns from parents, staff and other professionals about unsafe staffing levels. The trustees responsible for the governance of the school do not have the information they need to hold senior leaders to account. Leaders have not met their duty to provide suitable and safe provision for highly vulnerable pupils.

Leaders do not always follow the required procedures when excluding pupils from the school.

Many staff describe a culture of fear at the school. They do not feel able to raise concerns because they fear recrimination and blame.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not ensured that pupils are safe at the school. They have not acted on safeguarding concerns that other professionals have brought to their attention. They have not created a culture in which staff feel supported to raise their concerns. Some pupils are currently not attending school because parents fear for their safety.

Leaders and staff do not always recognise safeguarding incidents for what they are. Staff do not record serious incidents accurately. Some safeguarding incidents are not appropriately followed up with external agencies. Leaders do not investigate incidents adequately. Trustees are not kept informed about safeguarding concerns at the school. The school's safeguarding policy has not been adapted for the school. It does not provide staff with enough guidance about how to respond to specific safeguarding concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Senior leaders have failed to ensure adequate levels of staffing. Pupils cannot always be safely supervised. This puts them at risk of harm. Leaders need to ensure there are enough appropriately trained staff to manage the needs of all pupils and supervise them safely.
- Leaders have not ensured there are enough teaching staff in classrooms. Pupils are left unattended, sometimes for long periods of time. This means that they find unhelpful, and sometimes dangerous, ways to occupy their time. Leaders should ensure that there are enough appropriately trained staff in the classrooms. They should ensure that staff understand and cater for pupils' learning needs.
- Leaders and trustees have not created a culture of effective safeguarding. Staff do not feel supported to raise concerns they may have about pupils' well-being. Leaders and staff do not consistently identify when a pupil may be at risk of harm. They do not record all such incidents or manage them effectively. It is not always clear what actions have been taken to keep pupils safe. Leaders must create a culture in which all staff, trustees and visitors understand how to raise concerns and feel supported to do so. Leaders and trustees must ensure that they and staff understand and carry out their safeguarding responsibilities, recording all safeguarding concerns accurately, including any further actions that have been taken in response.
- The board of trustees does not fulfil its role or legal responsibilities. Trustees do not hold senior leaders to account for their actions. They have not ensured that pupils are safe at the school. They have not ensured that they have fulfilled their legal duties. Leaders should ensure that trustees know how to discharge their duties effectively.
- Leaders have not ensured there is a well-sequenced curriculum in place for all pupils that is appropriate to their needs. Staff do not know what to teach, when, or how to teach it. Pupils are not doing as well as they should. Some are falling behind in their learning and development. Leaders should ensure that they have a curriculum in place that meets pupils' needs. They should ensure that all staff are well trained and supported to deliver the curriculum.
- Leaders have failed to provide a personal development programme that meets the needs of all pupils. Pupils are missing out on important life skills and are unprepared for their next steps and for life in modern Britain. Leaders need to ensure that they provide a personal development programme that prepares pupils well for adult life.
- Leaders do not always follow the required procedures for registering and excluding pupils from the school. This means that the school's attendance and exclusion figures are inaccurate and misleading. Parents are unclear about the attendance of their children. Leaders should ensure that the correct register codes are used at all times and that they follow the required procedures when excluding a pupil.

- Leaders have not heeded concerns raised by staff, parents and other professionals, including from the health service. Staff are fearful of speaking up, and parents are disengaged. Relationships with other bodies have broken down. This means that leaders, staff, parents and other professionals are not able to work together in the best interests of pupils. Pupils do not get the full range of support and help they need, and are at risk. Leaders need to ensure a culture that allows for all views and concerns from staff, parents and other professionals to be freely expressed, listened to and acted on.

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	148530
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10220035
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Dryden
Principal	Claire-Marie Cuthbert (Executive Principal)
Website	www.harlow.evolutrust.org/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Harlow Academy is a special school for pupils aged three to 18 years. The school provides specialist educational facilities on a day basis. The school provides for pupils who have severe or profound learning difficulties, as well as additional difficulties that may include physical disabilities, complex medical needs, life-limiting conditions, speech and language difficulties, sensory impairments and under-developed social skills. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any off-site alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspectors deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives into the curriculum pathways with a focus on reading and literacy, mathematics and science. For these deep dives, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to the majority of classroom-based staff.
- Inspectors had individual and small group meetings with staff with different roles at the school.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the board of trustees, including the chair. They also spoke with representatives from the local authority and health services.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan.
- Inspectors took note of the responses received on Ofsted Parent View and considered the results of the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- To judge the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors read the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record, checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with staff about safeguarding.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Mosley

Her Majesty's Inspector

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