

# Inspection of The Harbour School

Station Road, Wilburton, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 3RR

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Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Lise Sugden. This school is part of Meridian Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mark Woods, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Shirley Jamieson. There is also an executive headteacher, Mary Abeyasekera, who is responsible for this school and two others.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The Harbour School is a place where pupils are well looked after. Adults take the time to understand pupils' often complex prior experiences. Pupils access appropriate emotional and well-being support to help them get their lives back on track. If pupils have a bad day, staff kindly and sensitively deal with any tricky situation. Pupils feel that staff have their best interests at heart.

Pupils access a raft of fun and engaging activities. Regular trips out build pupils' confidence and support them to interact positively with others. The list of '99 things to do before you are 15<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>' is carefully tracked. All pupils, regardless of background, can do things that are different. For instance, they enjoy fish and chips at the beach or visit a museum.

Pupils make friends and get on well with staff. Staff deal with issues, such as bullying, well. Staff help pupils to understand the importance of respecting others and themselves. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum teaches pupils well about important topics such as risk, county lines drug trafficking and consent.

While the school is improving, there is more work to do to improve the curriculum so that pupils achieve their best.

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

The school has been on a positive journey since joining the new trust. The school has addressed many issues, including site safety and pupils' behaviour. The current focus is on redesigning the curriculum. Leaders are working systematically to do this. They are ensuring that the changes made cater effectively for pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

However, redeveloping the curriculum and corresponding assessment approaches is still under way. Consequently, there remain subjects where the important knowledge pupils should learn is still being specified and sequenced. As the curriculum is in a state of change, staff are having to work harder to make it work. While many staff adapt their lessons around pupils' needs or what pupils know, some do not. These staff need clarity around what exactly to check pupils know, to inform their future teaching. Consequently, there are pupils who find learning tricky and are not making the progress they should.

There is a rigorous reading curriculum in place. Staff access frequent high-quality training and guidance to capably support pupils with learning to read. When pupils join the school, staff quickly check their reading knowledge. An effective phonics curriculum supports staff to plug gaps in pupils' reading. Staff read to pupils regularly, and many pupils enjoy reading. Many pupils are becoming confident and fluent readers.

Staff get detailed information about pupils with SEND. This information is regularly reviewed with pupils and their families. The curriculum, on the whole, is adapted well around pupils' varied social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. The school works together with a range of external agencies. This ensures that pupils get the help and support they need.

The school's approach to behaviour is working for most. Many pupils have positive attitudes to school life and learning. Suspensions and the use of physical intervention have reduced. While some pupils do find managing their behaviour hard, most staff give pupils the guidance to get them back on track. There are occasions when staff do not support behaviour as best they could. When this occurs, it takes longer for pupils to regain their focus.

Before joining the school, many pupils had exceptionally poor attendance. There is a different picture here, where pupils' attendance is much higher. Staff work closely with pupils and their families to remove any barriers to attending school.

The PSHE curriculum teaches pupils well about how others are different from themselves. Well-considered extra-curricular experiences build pupils' resilience and sense of self-worth. Pupils value the support for their mental health and well-being. The careers programme gives pupils appropriate advice and guidance about their next steps. Nearly all pupils move on to further study or the workplace.

Staff care about doing what is best for pupils. Well-qualified trustees and academy councillors challenge and monitor the school effectively so that it improves for pupils and their families.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Some curriculum plans are not ordered in a logical sequence. This makes it harder for pupils to build their knowledge step by step. The school should continue to improve the remaining curriculum plans so that the key knowledge is ordered sequentially and ensure that staff are well equipped to deliver the plans effectively.
- The school's current assessment system does not match the new curriculum. This makes it harder for staff to spot how well pupils are progressing. The school should ensure that all assessment matches the knowledge taught and helps staff to support pupils to make progress.
- A small number of staff do not always use the school's chosen behaviour approach consistently well. This means that some pupils are not supported with their behaviour as effectively as they could be. Leaders should ensure all staff

have the necessary training, guidance and support to help pupils to improve their behaviour.

## 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.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148236
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10288583
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	103
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Shirley Jamieson
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Mark Woods
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lise Sugden
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://theharbour.academy">https://theharbour.academy</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The Harbour School became an academy in January 2021. When its predecessor school, The Harbour School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses the services of five unregistered alternative providers.
- All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school provides specialist education for pupils with SEMH needs and autism. Some pupils have multiple needs.
- Many pupils join the school at different points in their school life. A number of pupils have gaps in schooling prior to joining the school.

## Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Due to the nature of the specialist curriculum, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following areas: reading, mathematics, geography and PSHE. In each area, inspectors met with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at evidence of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector visited lessons in other subjects, such as science and food technology.
- Inspectors scrutinised the use of EHC plans, pupil profiles and behaviour support plans for pupils across different classes.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector scrutinised the school's behaviour systems, attendance information and records of behaviour incidents.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the academy council and the trust, including the chief executive officer and a trustee.
- The lead inspector spoke with the local authority's designated safeguarding officer.
- The lead inspector considered the 12 responses made to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, including 12 free-text responses. The lead inspector also considered 31 responses to Ofsted's survey of staff.
- The lead inspector considered the 11 responses made by pupils to Ofsted's pupil survey. Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from different classes across both days of the inspection. Inspectors spent time with pupils in unstructured times, including breaktimes and lunchtimes, to observe behaviour and speak to pupils about school life.

## Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michele Geddes

Ofsted Inspector

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