



Harbour School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119046
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280448
Inspection dates 7 June 2006 to 7 June 2006
Reporting inspector Charles Hackett AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special	School address	Elms Vale Road
School category	Community special		Dover
Age range of pupils	4 to 16		Kent CT17 9PS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01304 201964
Number on roll	90	Fax number	01304 225000
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr K Benn
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr A A Berresford

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Harbour School provides education for pupils with special educational needs from reception age (Foundation Stage) through to Year 11. Since its previous inspection, the school has been re-designated and now caters for children with a combination of behaviour, emotional, social and learning difficulties. Of the current population, a few pupils in the school have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and about a quarter have moderate learning difficulties. Because of their learning difficulties, pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below the national average. Pupils come from a variety of home backgrounds, with a third coming from areas of social deprivation.

The school is in the midst of a complete rebuilding project and areas of the site are cordoned off from staff and pupils, with portable cabins being used as teaching bases.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Harbour School is an outstanding special school where pupils receive a highly effective quality of education. This judgement matches the school's own analysis. It very successfully meets its aims, particularly that to 'promote high standards of teaching and learning within a stimulating and orderly environment'. Pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage, irrespective of their particular special needs or whether or not they are in the care of the local authority, make consistently good progress and many far exceed the expectations of them when they first enter the school. Their personal development is excellent as a result of the careful attention staff show toward their physical, emotional and social well-being. Pupils' excellent attendance is testament to the enjoyment and allegiance they have for the school. They appreciate its many fine qualities and the opportunities they have to make contributions to how it is organised. When pressed to come up with one thing that could make their school better, the school council struggled to find an aspect to report to inspectors, until one pupil said 'I've got it. They could fill in the rabbit holes up on the top field.'

The headteacher leads a very strong senior group of staff, who share with the whole-staff team the same high commitment for the success of the school. The challenges of the recent changes in the school population and working alongside builders, cranes and building materials and debris have all been faced successfully and have not been allowed to have a negative impact on the school's work. Excellent self-evaluation processes ensure that the school fully understands its strengths and relative weaknesses and is constantly seeking to improve. Difficulties in accessing services such as speech and occupational therapy mean that despite their best efforts and the many good links with other agencies, the school is not fully meeting its aim to 'work in partnership with other services, to support children and their parents or carers'. However, despite this weakness, there is no doubt that Harbour School is a very special place that offers excellent value for money and has the capacity to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Together with the local authority, develop stronger and more effective links with other services, such as speech and occupational therapy.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The achievements of pupils are outstanding. Using a range of nationally recognised systems to track and gauge pupils' progress, the school has the evidence to show that pupils, irrespective of their learning difficulties or disabilities, are making good and, in many cases, outstanding progress. These rates of progress enable older pupils to successfully pass a wide range of external examinations. Whilst pupils' learning difficulties mean that standards remain well below the average for all schools, national data indicates that results achieved are well above those of comparable schools. Grades

in art GCSEs have been particularly good and this is supported by the outstanding quality of art work on display.

The very few pupils who enter the school in the Foundation Stage achieve well and are well prepared for moving into their Year 1 class. Throughout the school, excellent recording systems show that pupils achieve well in reaching the targets set in their individual plans. The school also sets challenging whole-school targets for achievement and these have been met and then further increased for the next year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. During their time at the school pupils grow in confidence and increase their self-esteem. They thoroughly enjoy attending school and this shows in their excellent attendance. Pupils enjoy their learning and observations of them in class show they take a real interest in the topics being covered. This occurred in a primary science lesson looking at germination, when a pupil enthusiastically shouted that he 'couldn't wait for the sunflower (the class are growing) to flower'.

Pupils respond well to each other and staff, and behaviour in class and outside is excellent. Pupils understand the importance of being safe and know that if they have concerns, staff are there to listen to them. This was confirmed by a recent pupil questionnaire where every pupil said they knew there was a member of staff they could go to if they had a problem.

The excellent emphasis on healthy living helps pupils develop a very good understanding of the importance of regularly drinking water and eating healthily. This was typified by a secondary pupil who, after examining the inspector's choice for lunch, commented 'you're OK, that looks healthy'. Pupils know they are listened to and have a chance to contribute to how the school is organised. There are many examples of changes to daily routines, such as breaktime routines, that have been influenced by the views of pupils. Pupils' economic well-being is outstanding. Work in literacy and numeracy supports this very well and for older pupils the excellent opportunities for work experiences and mini-enterprise projects ensure that all are very well prepared for leaving and moving on to either employment or college.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers understand the many different needs of pupils and plan very appropriately to meet them. For example, good use is made of specialist strategies to support ASD pupils. Lessons have a clear structure and teachers make it clear what they are expecting pupils to learn. An excellent range of activities and innovative approaches taken by teachers successfully engage pupils in learning and motivate them to tackle the tasks set for them. This was typified in a

primary maths lesson when the teacher, having given some examples on an interactive whiteboard, said to the class. 'now you are going to try and solve a few problems', to which a pupil replied 'oh, just like being detectives'.

Excellent relationships and clear expectations of pupils' behaviour ensure that classrooms are very effective learning environments. Staff work very well as a team, with teaching assistants playing important roles in supporting individual pupils or small groups. Learning is also well supported by the consistent use of a marking system that clearly states how much help a pupil has received to complete their work and grades their efforts.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum and the many other activities that the school offers are outstanding. All expected national curriculum subject areas are covered and in addition there are many other activities designed to meet the needs of pupils. These include specific sessions such as anger management and reflexology, as well as regular residential experiences. The structure to the curriculum is very effective, particularly so in the secondary department, where a system called 'Personalised Learning Pathways' successfully ensures that pupils' attitudes, attendance, behaviour and willingness to engage in learning are all enhanced. The development of an enrichment and experiential curriculum in the primary department is also having a marked impact on pupils' behaviour, and staff report that it is bringing about a greater engagement in learning from pupils. Pupils are encouraged through many activities on the curriculum to be independent and think and evaluate their own performances. This is particularly so for older pupils in physical education where work for Junior Sports Leader Awards encourages them to talk about their performances and that of others in the group and consider what they can do to improve. Mini-enterprise projects and ASDAN (a nationally accredited life skills programme) also form valuable parts of what is an interesting and varied curriculum for all.

The school promotes the principles of health and safety very well throughout the curriculum and pupils engage in at least two hours of physical activity each week. Significant emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' key skills in planning the work in all other subjects and this again has an important impact on pupils' preparation for later in life and on developing their confidence. Good purposeful opportunities are provided for pupils to experience mainstream links. These include creative arts and drama courses, where pupils as class groups visit and attend sessions in mainstream schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are outstanding. The school works very hard to create a positive, supportive atmosphere where pupils are safe and enjoy their learning. Care and guidance are promoted well through the excellent relationships and very effective systems for ensuring that all pupils achieve to the best of their

abilities. These include the setting of challenging targets within pupils' individual education plans. These are reviewed regularly with the full involvement of pupils, and parents and carers. Successful systems manage and improve pupils' behaviour and the results of pupils' surveys indicate improvements have been made. One Year 10 girl commented, 'behaviour used to be really bad, it is really good now'.

Child protection and other safeguarding systems are all in place and staff are well trained and briefed in these aspects. Governors support these very well, particularly in assessing health and safety issues in relation to the on-going building work.

There are many examples of good support from visiting agencies, such as the school nurse and police liaison officer. However, despite it being a key aim of the school, links with other services, such as speech and occupational therapy, are not as effective as the school would like. Links with parents are very effective and well organised through a family support officer.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The senior team are a very strong unit and are very ably led by the headteacher. The assured manner in which the school has managed its change of designation, as well as the upheaval brought about by the building work, demonstrates the highly effective leadership and management of the school. Senior staff carry out their individual roles very well and together lead a team of staff determined to provide the best they can for pupils. There are excellent processes of self-evaluation that lead to all staff playing an active part in school development. Senior staff listen carefully to the views of staff, pupils, parents and governors and make good use of data on pupils' achievements. This ensures that the school improvement plan has a clear focus on improving pupils' achievements even further.

The previous inspection report criticised what was called 'middle management systems'. These are now highly effective because staff in the primary and secondary department work closely together to ensure that there is consistency in the planning and teaching of their subjects throughout the school. The governors are very supportive and through their committee systems challenge and monitor the work of the school very effectively. The school, through the improvements made since the previous inspection, shows it has the capacity to improve even further and offers excellent value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you so much for being so helpful when Mr Hill and I visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you and chatting about your school. We know you think you are in a very special school and we agree with you.

The key points in our report are:

- We feel your staff work very hard to do everything they can to support you.
- We think the teaching, all the lessons and activities you do and the care and support staff give you are all excellent.
- We are very sure that your headteacher and the other senior staff lead and manage your school very well.
- You too do your bit to help through your very good attitudes and behaviour and the helpful ideas you put forward in the school council.

The school knows and we agree that one thing that would make your school even better is to have better links with other services, such as speech and occupational therapy. Thank you once again for being so helpful to us. We know from looking at the plans for your new school that you have exciting times ahead.