

The Harbour School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134193
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	316244
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–14
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Joan Maurice-Smith
Headteacher	Dr John Steward
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2005
School address	Station Road Wilburton Cambridgeshire CB6 3RR
Telephone number	01353 740229
Fax number	01353 740632

Age group	5–14
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Inspection number	316244

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Harbour School is a residential special school. The 79 boys on roll all have statements of special educational need for learning difficulties arising from recognised emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. As a result of their learning difficulties, pupils' attainment on entry is very low. Nearly all pupils are White British and six are looked after by the local authority. Twelve of the boys are boarders at the school during the week in term time. At present pupils leave at the end of Year 9 and transfer to mainstream schools, pupil referral units or other special schools.

The Harbour School has links with village colleges in Comberton, Ely, and Cottenham, which are used to support the curriculum and, whenever possible, pupils' return to mainstream school. It also has links with community support services. The school has appointed a full time consultant child and adolescent psychotherapist and home school liaison officer.

At present, building extensions are well underway to provide new classroom accommodation including specialist and sports facilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Harbour School is a good school. All of its pupils have found it too difficult in the past to engage effectively in learning and make a success of school. They overcome their problems at this school because its strong pastoral support sustains them through the challenges they face in making progress. The headteacher is effective in providing the school with a clear vision and strong direction. The school's main aim of steering pupils in the right direction for a successful future is achieved well. In pursuit of this the governors supply outstanding support. Leadership across the school is good. Boarding provision is good and it is effectively led and managed.

The school takes really good care of pupils and provides them with very effective support during the school day and for boarders in residential hours. This helps them all to grow into mature individuals. Their personal development is good. Behaviour management is both consistent and skilful. Behaviour is good and pupils form positive relationships with staff and each other. In this way they make a significant contribution to their happy and successful school. Pupils' views are actively sought and what they have to say counts considerably towards what happens. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is good. The school encourages pupils to adopt a positive outlook and a good quality of life. As a result, they engage well in pursuing a healthy lifestyle and staying safe. The curriculum offers a broad range of work and activities that reflect pupils' interests. It is well adapted to their needs. The curriculum provides good opportunities where pupils can succeed and gain confidence. A wide choice of additional activities, sports and adventure in particular, make learning and achieving attractive.

The standards pupils reach in their work are low because of their histories of disrupted education. However, standards improve and pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and learning. Most lessons succeed in pupils making good progress because relationships between staff and pupils are secure and pupils' needs are well understood. Behaviour is managed well in classrooms and, more often than not, high expectations lead to pupils making good efforts to complete work effectively. Pupils are prepared well for the future. When they leave at the end of Year 9 a good proportion return to mainstream school, while others make a successful transition to alternative educational provisions.

Teaching has improved largely as a result of the headteacher's success in recruiting subject specialists who are well suited to meeting pupils' needs. Their enthusiasm and effective planning really engages pupils and gets the best from them. However, not all planning hits the mark as successfully. Sometimes assessment is applied too infrequently and this contributes to the occasional lesson not being sharply focused on what pupils should learn. Where lessons are affected in this way, pupils are not as well engaged or challenged and this has most impact in English. Moreover, because assessment is not consistent, pupils do not get the same strong support for academic progress as they do for personal development and well-being. Furthermore, leaders do not evaluate teaching and learning with the sort of precision to enable them to tackle its few shortfalls. Subject leadership is effective in implementing many well-planned learning opportunities for pupils, although it is yet to have sufficient impact on sharpening the focus in English that is needed to improve achievement further.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Boarding provision is good and is well led and managed. There is a seamless quality to the aims and work of the school and boarding. Boarders are happy and secure. They thoroughly enjoy their relationships with each other and staff. Moreover, they believe they have a good range of leisure and other activities each evening, which they say keeps them happy and purposefully occupied. Boarders welcome the day pupils who are beginning to join in on some of their evening activities. Pupils' personal development is supported effectively. Boarding staff set high expectations and routines are clearly defined for pupils. Behaviour is managed effectively and good incentives lead to pupils behaving well.

The most recent inspection carried out by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in July 2006 reported good provision for nearly all aspects of pupils' personal development, care and support. There were no issues identified for action. The provision for pupils' economic well-being was poor because of inadequacies in boarding accommodation. A substantial refurbishment of boarding accommodation was underway, is now complete, and is of a good quality.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in English by strengthening the leadership and management of the subject.
- Increase the regularity of assessment and its use in order to support pupils' progress.
- Ensure all lesson planning specifies clear learning objectives and teaching approaches that will engage and challenge pupils effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because they have developed a positive attitude to learning. They respond well to teachers' high expectations, work hard and make good progress. Pupils enter school with very low standards for their age as a result of their learning difficulties and, in many cases, missed schooling. However, with good teaching and the increasing amount of good subject expertise, pupils improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. While standards are low they are improving. This is most marked in the development of practical skills such as in information and communication technology (ICT), physical education (PE) and design and technology (D&T), where progress is good. Equally, when teachers plan their lessons so pupils learn in practical ways, for example, by experimenting in science, pupils enjoy work more and progress well. Measures of their progress towards achieving targets show pupils achieve very well in science. Similar measures for English and mathematics indicate satisfactory progress, although more recent improvements in mathematics have resulted in pupils making good progress in their current work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's values are very clear, particularly the 'Three Respects', which means pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They enjoy school. Their attendance is good and they are happy with their work and activities. Pupils feel well supported and secure and act safely as a result. Behaviour

is good. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive and pupils' self-confidence and regard for others develop effectively. Exclusions are extremely rare and only temporary when required. In lessons, pupils often work well together and work hard. They are enthusiastic and generous in their contributions to school life and good ambassadors away from school. Pupils have an active school council whose views are valued and these are confidently presented at governors' meetings by a pupil representative. Pupils gain a clear understanding of taking good personal care and staying healthy. Good achievement together with their progress in personal development prepares pupils well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good relationships between pupils and staff and the effective management of behaviour contribute to effective learning. Lessons are well organised, pupils are settled and willingly get on with their work. Most lessons are planned in ways that mean pupils can quickly engage in work and take part in activities that really interest them. Role-play in personal, social and health education, games in PE and building models in D&T typify some of the successful approaches to learning. These activities are also planned well with clear objectives that are explained clearly to pupils. As a result, the assessment of pupils' progress is carried out effectively. However, not all lessons include good learning objectives and, occasionally, what pupils have learnt is not assessed with sufficient regularity and precision.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved well since the previous inspection and the governors' curriculum committee has very effectively supported school leadership in driving forward these improvements. The development of specialist expertise in a good number of subjects, through successful recruitment and training staff has led to a broad range of work and activities that are well matched to pupils' interests and needs. Science, ICT, D&T and PE are all strong subjects, as a result. The school has also done well to improve pupils' learning opportunities by using its links with schools to provide additional activities such as drama and music. Comprehensive and well-planned provision promotes pupils' personal development and well-being. Literacy and numeracy are satisfactory, and improvements in mathematics are effectively underway, which shows in pupils' progress. Greater expertise and stronger leadership is called for to sharpen the focus on pupils' literacy skills. In school and during boarding hours, pupils have many good opportunities to develop interests and skills in the arts, sports and outdoor pursuits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are exceptionally well guided and supported in relation to their personal development and emotional well-being. The support provided to pupils in lessons is satisfactory. Pupils work and live in a safe environment and are offered positive relationships with adults. Pupils' behaviour is managed very effectively. The school's psychotherapist provides good professional guidance to staff, helping them to know how best to work with pupils. Very clear procedures ensure pupils are protected and risk assessments and individual behaviour plans are robust. Good partnerships with a wide range of professional agencies means pupils' personal needs

are being met. Parents and carers contribute well in reviewing and planning their children's needs.

While certain aspects of assessment are good, particularly in tracking pupils' progress twice yearly, assessment procedures are not focused enough on keeping pupils really well informed about their progress, although there are exceptions, such as in PE. Sometimes pupils' targets are not precise or given a high profile in lessons. The marking of pupils' work does not always provide clear advice on how they can make improvements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's strong leadership, highlighted by the previous inspection, is a key feature in the school having clear direction and high expectations. Governors demonstrate a high degree of expertise and commitment and are outstanding in supporting the school's direction and challenging its results. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and clearly demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. As a result of a well articulated vision and much effective management, there is a sharp focus on achieving the school's aims. The leadership of the educational provision benefits from the school's vision and high expectations, although its management does not have the obvious strengths seen in the coordination of pupils' care and support. Subject leadership while developing well is not embedded. The monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance and of the quality of education is not as sharply focused as that surrounding pupils' behaviour and well-being.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Harbour School, Wilburton, Cambridgeshire CB6 3RR

We thoroughly enjoyed the two days spent visiting your school recently. Many thanks for your warm welcome, friendliness and help. We would also like to offer a special thanks to the pupils and boarders who met with us to share their views of the school. My letter is to tell you what we think about your school.

From all that we found out from visiting your lessons, looking at your work, talking to staff and you and reading what many of your parents said, we judge that your school is good.

Teaching is good and this is helping you make good progress. We were impressed with the very good support the school gives to you through the day and into the evening for boarders. We saw how this is helping you to behave well and to get on well with staff and each other. This gives you lots of confidence to tackle difficulties and do well in lessons and in many other ways. This is a good preparation for you to carry on successfully with your education when you eventually leave school.

You are learning important lessons about staying healthy and safe because the school is doing such a good job of promoting the right ideas about these areas. The staff have put together a really interesting programme of work and activities for you. We were impressed by how much you enjoyed many of your lessons.

Your headteacher and the staff have done really well to make the school as good as it is and to bring about more improvements. Governors are giving super support to the school. There are things the school can do to make your progress even better. We have asked the headteacher to improve the development of your literacy skills. We have asked him to ensure all lessons are planned so you are very clear on what it is you are learning and to make sure you have the support to help you improve your progress.

On behalf of the team, many thanks for your help and we wish you all well for the future.

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector