

The Harbour School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134193
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	342429
Inspection dates	15-16 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5-16 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lee Ginger
Headteacher	Mary Rayner (acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	28-29 November 2007
School address	Station Road Wilburton Cambridgeshire CB6 3RR
Telephone number	01353 740229
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Age group	5 – 16 Years
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and held meetings with staff, governors, a group of pupils, and a local authority officer. They observed the school's work, and looked at policies, reports of the residential provision, pupils' books and nine questionnaires from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- in the light of the school's decline over the past years, the capacity of senior leaders and managers to drive improvement and demonstrate the extent of their impact in pupils' outcomes since the last inspection
- the extent to which pupils' progress is rapid enough in relation to their behavioural and educational needs.

Information about the school

The Harbour School is a residential special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. In addition, many have moderate learning difficulties. Not all pupils are boarders. Currently, 13 pupils are resident between Mondays and Fridays during term time. The quality of the residential provision was not inspected during this inspection. This is because the boarding was inspected towards the end of last term, on 26 June 2009, when the overall quality rating for the boarding was judged as good. There were six recommendations for improvement.

The school can admit pupils from the age of five but has only ever provided for those between the ages of seven and sixteen years. Having extended the provision to include pupils in Years 10 and 11, this is the first year that pupils will complete Key Stage 4 at the school. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. Prior to admission, many pupils have had disrupted periods of schooling, including exclusions from mainstream schools.

At the time of the last inspection, the school's overall effectiveness was judged as good. Since that time, the local authority, the governors and senior leaders acknowledge that there have been significant inadequacies in the quality of education and care provided for the pupils at the school. This included serious concerns with regard to safeguarding pupils' welfare and well-being. There have been several changes to the leadership of the school. One of the deputy headteachers is currently leading the school and has been the acting headteacher for some time. The local authority has provided the school with additional support.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Over the past two years there have been some difficult times for the pupils, their families, staff and governors at The Harbour School. Serious inadequacies were identified and the boys were not able to do as well as they should. Difficult decisions had to be made. As a result of concerted and sustained effort, those currently responsible for leading and managing the school have successfully turned things around. In a relatively short period, the school has made up for this lost time and has now reinstated some of the previously identified good practice. Although they have had significant support from the local authority, the required changes have come from within and the school is not dependent on this support for sustaining the good improvement. For this reason, although the school's overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory, its capacity to sustain this improvement is good.

There is still much to be done. The implementation of some of the actions will require more time before the school can judge how effective they have been. Some actions have already borne fruit, as demonstrated by improvements in pupils' achievements and their responses to changes to the curriculum. Some aspects of the school's work have continued to flourish. For example, the care, guidance and support that pupils receive are good because of the steadfast dedication to the boys' general well-being. It is largely because of this that most parents and carers continue to be confident and positive about the school in spite of uncertain times. Some uncertainty still remains because of the acting leadership position. The staff too would wish this to be resolved quickly.

One of the keys to further improvement is in the quality of teaching. Weaknesses in the leadership of teaching and learning led to a decline in behaviour and insufficient academic progress. The boys were not sufficiently interested or engaged in learning. This is not now the case. Effective behaviour management, reorganisation of teaching groups and better lesson planning now ensures that the boys are generally in class and concentrate well on their work. Although better, lesson planning is not yet sharp enough to ensure that activities and skills are tailored specifically to pupils' individual needs and targets. In addition, assessments in lessons, marking of work and homework are not used effectively or consistently enough as tools for the boys to be more actively involved in their own learning.

A further key to improvement lies in the tracking of pupils' progress over time. Issues concerning the accuracy of past assessments have been effectively addressed. This has enabled more challenging targets to be set and achieved over the last academic year. It has also helped senior staff to identify areas of weakness and implement effective strategies, such as for reading. Targets do not yet take into account

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individual pupils' abilities and behavioural development. A new cycle for regular monitoring of attainment for literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology is in place and a new system for staff to gain quick access to a range of assessment information has been recently established. The use of tracking data by teachers to inform their planning is at an early stage.

The senior leadership team have a good picture of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. They know what to do to improve it. They have sufficient information to analyse how well the pupils are achieving but the use of evidence to determine the extent of their effectiveness is less thorough. This applies equally to the governing body, which ensures that statutory requirements are met and that appropriate policies are in place but pays less attention to monitoring and analysing the effectiveness of them.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Resolve the interim arrangements for the senior leadership of the school as soon as possible.
- Ensure a consistent approach to the planning of teaching and learning so that there are:
 - clear principles and expectations for planning lessons, including matching the work to pupils' needs and abilities
 - opportunities for regular assessments of what pupils know, understand and can do in relation to the lesson objectives and individual education and behaviour plans
 - more formal monitoring of lessons and learning by senior leaders
 - clear procedures for marking pupils' work and giving other feedback.
- Improve the tracking of academic attainment and behavioural skills so that:
 - targets for achievement to be sufficiently challenging
 - expectations are different for different pupils according to their ability and behavioural development
 - teachers use tracking data to plan lessons and assess progress against targets more thoroughly.
- Evaluate the quality of different aspects of their provision more thoroughly by:
 - establishing a deeper understanding of what works well and why
 - governors being better informed and more challenging.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils now make expected progress in their learning and personal development. This is because more consistent behaviour management and good pastoral support has improved pupils' attitudes towards learning. In addition, improvements in the quality

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of teaching and the curriculum have made learning more purposeful, practical and enjoyable. The school's tracking data shows that those pupils who have been at the school the longest have made faster academic progress. It also shows that when boys become residents they make faster progress than day pupils. Although the ability range is considerably wide and attainment generally below national averages, this accelerated progress means that pupils start to catch up with lost learning and attain closer to national averages in some subjects. Attainments in literacy are better than those in mathematics and this reflects the current areas of development. The recent focus on reading has not only improved pupils' basic literacy skills, but has also had a positive effect on their confidence in other areas of the curriculum.

The boys' behaviour is now generally good. The rates of exclusions, restraints and incidents of inappropriate behaviour have been too high in the past. When matched to particular periods of crisis in school it can be seen how uncertainty and change have adversely affected pupils' behaviour. As the school's leadership has settled so has pupils' behaviour, particularly since Easter this year. Older pupils get on well with one another and some successfully return to mainstream schools. Younger pupils and those with the most complex behavioural needs demonstrate increasing periods of appropriate behaviour. For example, new pupils who previously refused to stay in class or whose language is particularly inappropriate, quickly start to respond to higher expectations and are able to concentrate on work or play for extended periods of time. Pupils of all ages show empathy and consideration when their friends are having a difficult time. For example, one of the younger boys was observed to be particularly supportive of another who was very reluctant to try new things in a music lesson. In another lesson older pupils were very sensitive to others who struggled with reading aloud in class.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school, although they also report some bullying. Incident reports confirm that bullying has been a problem and that the incidence has decreased. Older boys say that things are better now because most of those causing trouble have now left. Pupils throughout the school show good awareness of safety in practical subjects. This enables them to use specialist equipment for design and technology, cooking, art and music with appropriate regard for their own safety and that of others. Pupils also show a good awareness of their personal health. For example, in one lesson older boys discussed sexual health sensibly and reflected on their own knowledge and views on the subject of pregnancy and contraception.

At the end of last term older pupils requested a house system and were given the opportunity to try this out by arranging and running the sports day. This was a great success and led to the formal establishment of the house system this term. Captains and vice captains were elected and the weekly house meetings are already seen by the boys as valuable opportunities to air their views and make suggestions. They are particularly keen to suggest changes at lunchtimes. They think that the food is too expensive, not varied enough and could be of better quality. They are unsure of the new arrangements for having lunch in their house groups. Older boys feel that they are not treated maturely enough because they are with younger ones who are not so well behaved. Although, as one boy put it 'I used to be like that'!

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Recent changes to the curriculum include a greater focus on practical activities and the development of a 'strand curriculum' to link basic skills across other subjects. This is already helping to improve pupils' engagement in lessons and offers a wider range of experiences and choices. Behaviour in lessons has improved significantly. This contributes to their spiritual awareness and experiences. For example, in a music lesson boys performed impromptu duets that were both calming and inspiring to the rest of the group. Another example was in a science lesson where boys were amazed at how much breath they had inside their bodies when using water to displace the capacity of their lungs. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to extend their cultural awareness. Their personal skills are well supported by integrating personal, social and health education across the curriculum.

Teachers and support staff have very good relationships with pupils and know them very well. They conscientiously provide activities so that pupils move swiftly from one task to the next, enabling them to succeed at short tasks and maintain their concentration. Pupils' interest is stimulated through practical and lively experiences so that learning happens in less obvious ways. Examples include using the swimming pool in a science lesson to chart rates of breathing, and the woods to collect items to draw. Weaknesses in lesson planning mean that activities are not well linked to the assessment of individual targets. In general, lesson objectives are not specific enough to the knowledge, skills and understanding that individual pupils will achieve

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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through the activities. As a result, opportunities for the boys to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their learning are lost.

The reduction of incidents and restraints is a direct result of staffs' increasing confidence and expertise in deescalating behaviours. Similarly, seeking support from other staff before situations become too difficult means that pupils are well supported to return to work more easily and quickly. Good quality training and professional dialogue is helping this to happen and the school's Family Team makes a significant contribution to this. They have not only increased their work with families (over one hundred interventions last year), but they have also influenced the school's ethos, through developing a deeper understanding of pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties. The integration of this team within the whole staff is very strong and very effective. It ensures that the child is at the centre of everybody's thinking and contribution, and that interventions are coordinated and well understood.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

At times of crisis, key members of the governing body took swift and decisive action. With good support from the local authority they have ensured that suitable policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children and to address the health, safety and well-being of pupils and staff. They meet all of their statutory responsibilities but are not yet fully involved in the systematic evaluation and strategic development of the school. Similarly, although suitable policies and plans for promoting community cohesion and equal opportunities are in place, their effectiveness has not been explored specifically in relation to the pupils' needs and difficulties.

The acting headteacher leads the school very well and rightly enjoys the confidence, support and respect of staff, pupils and families. School leaders and managers at all levels have very high expectations for school improvement. Their drive, enthusiasm and effectiveness are demonstrated by the school's rapid improvement over the past 12 months, successfully moving inadequate provision to a securely satisfactory position. This puts the school in a very good position to move forward with confidence.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Boarding provision

The boarding provision was not inspected at this time. The grade and comments below are taken from the recent Ofsted inspection by a social care inspector. Copies of the full report are available on Ofsted's web-site.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

All National Minimum Standards that were inspected at the last social care inspection were met. The following recommendations were made:

- develop further and implement a policy on promoting the health of children in the school (NMS 14.4)
- ensure that a formalised method is implemented to monitor children who consistently refuse to eat and for those who over eat or have other eating disorders (NMS 15.6)
- ensure that records of sanctions are recorded separately for each child (NMS 10.9)
- ensure placement plans detail how staff will care for each boarder in accordance with their assessed needs, monitors progress in relation to the plan, and updates that plan as necessary (NMS 17.1)
- ensure that the school has a written Statement of Purpose, which accurately describes what the school sets out to do for those children it accommodates, and the manner in which care is provided in line with National Minimum Standards (NMS 1)
- ensure that once a year a review of the welfare provision for boarding pupils in line with NMS32 is undertaken and a report is completed and submitted to the governing body (NMS 32.4)

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These are the grades for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	2
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Views of parents and carers

Only a small proportion of parents and carers responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. School records show that many parents and carers regularly come to school for events such as the 'blokes on board' day and reviews. Questionnaires indicate a high level of satisfaction with the school. Several wrote of their pleasure and surprise at how quickly their children settled after a few weeks at the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Harbour School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received nine completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 55 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	2	11	5	55	2	22	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	44	5	55	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	66	3	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	33	4	44	1	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	66	3	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	55	2	33	2	22	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	66	3	33	0	0	0	
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	5	55	2	22	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	66	2	22	1	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	55	4	44	0	0	0	0

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The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	44	4	44	1	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	55	4	44	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	5	55	3	33	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



17 September 2009

Dear Pupils,

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

You may remember that I was the inspector in your school for two days at the beginning of term. I think that I saw most of you, either in class, in the playground or at lunchtime. I spoke to as many of you as I could and I was very pleased to meet some of your new house captains. I learned a lot about your school and now I am writing to let you know what I found out and the judgements that I made.

I know that there have been some difficult times at The Harbour School over the past two years and that you have had several headteachers and lots of other changes. Mrs Rayner and the rest of the staff have worked very hard to turn things around and to make the school a better place for you. They have worked especially hard to make the curriculum more interesting and you seem to like this because I can see that your behaviour in lessons has improved. I know that the pupils have worked hard as well, particularly to manage their behaviour in different ways and get used to the changes.

The school gives you a satisfactory education and good care and support. The staff and governors are very keen to improve things further and they have many plans for what to do next. I have made some suggestions that I think will help. Teachers need to plan lessons more carefully so that you are clearer about what you are learning and know what you can do next to do even better. The senior staff need to improve the way that they track your achievements so that they make sure that you are doing as well as you can in your learning. Finally, staff and governors need to look more carefully at what the school does well and the things that need more attention.

I have written a report about the inspection of your school. It is not too long and I hope that some of you will read it with your families or at school because I have written a lot more about the good things that I saw and learned about.

I wish you well in your future at The Harbour School. It was a pleasure to spend time with you. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector

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