

Inspection of Arbour House School

15–17 Glendinning Avenue, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 7QF

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Arbour House provides a calm and nurturing environment for pupils to learn. Pupils are happy and safe. Staff know pupils and their families well. Many pupils arrive following poor experiences in education. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers appreciate the care and support the school provides for their children.

Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils develop trusting relationships with adults. Pastoral support is strong. Pupils receive individualised provision that includes preparing them for the next steps in their education.

Staff support pupils to learn in a calm and purposeful environment. Pupils learn to manage their behaviour through clear routines and the positive relationships they have built with adults. Adults adapt readily to changes in pupils' behaviour to ensure that learning is not disrupted. Staff promote a positive ethos of respect in the school. In turn, pupils value and respect others. Bullying is rare.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive a curriculum that supports their personal development alongside their academic needs. This curriculum is responsive to the needs of the individual.

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

Leaders have high ambition for every pupil at the school. This ambition is shared among the whole staff team. Staff morale is high. They appreciate the determined leadership of the headteacher. Leaders and staff understand the needs of pupils well. All are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, leaders organise personalised and flexible curriculums to enable staff to respond to pupils' needs and adapt learning accordingly.

Leaders prioritise reading. Staff recognise the importance of all pupils being able to read. Teachers ensure that relevant support is in place for those working towards examinations. Pupils in the younger years are supported in learning to read through a well-structured phonics scheme. Staff carefully assess where pupils are in their learning and adapt teaching where necessary. Staff look to pupils' interests to provide a range of books to support their love of reading.

Older pupils say they like reading. They read a range of high-quality texts as part of the English curriculum and through books they select for themselves from the local library. Pupils talk about the range of books they have read and enjoyed. Staff provide pupils with regular opportunities to read across the week. This provides pupils with the time to immerse themselves in a range of different stories for enjoyment.

Leaders have developed individualised learning pathways linked to the national curriculum to organise knowledge and skills across a range of subjects. Everyday living skills are woven throughout the curriculum. In art and English, careful consideration has been given to what learning comes when and how new learning builds on what pupils know. Staff carefully check pupils' prior understanding. They provide frequent

feedback for them to improve their work. However, this is still developing in other subjects. Key content staff want pupils to know is not always broken down in precise detail. As a result, some pupils do not gain the range and depth of knowledge they should over time.

Staff receive frequent training in how to support pupils with complex needs, including their social and emotional needs. As a result, staff understand how to develop pupils' communication skills, which enables pupils to access more of the planned curriculum.

Pupils' behaviour is managed well. Clear routines and planned sensory activities at the start of the school day enable pupils to settle to learning successfully. When pupils struggle with their behaviour, staff react sensitively using personalised strategies to support pupils to re-engage with their learning.

Leaders place pupils' personal development at the forefront of the curriculum. Carefully planned opportunities allow pupils to experience independence and develop self-awareness. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum enables pupils to develop into well-rounded citizens. Through careful conversation, pupils consider aspects of their well-being, including healthy relationships. Staff provide pupils with many opportunities to learn how to live independent lives. These include using public transport and visiting local areas of interest, such as the gym and libraries, as well as developing their cultural understanding through visits to London.

Governors and the proprietor board understand their responsibilities and provide effective challenge to leaders. They have an accurate view of the school and its strengths. They ensure that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. **Leaders support staff well. Staff are proud to work and the school.**

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have clear processes in place to keep pupils physically and emotionally safe. Relevant checks are carried out when appointing new staff. Staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. They receive regular and comprehensive safeguarding training. Staff understand how to recognise and report any concerns about a child's welfare. They know leaders take all concerns seriously.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through PSHE lessons, visits to the local community and through discussions.

Relevant safeguarding policies are available on the school's website for parents.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Many areas of the curriculum, such as English and art, have been well designed and implemented. However, leaders have not yet developed other areas of learning to the same level so that pupils learn as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that knowledge develops systematically across all subjects so that all pupils know more and remember more over time in all subjects.

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 provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	143642
DfE registration number	838/6039
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10212958
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Potens
Chair	Nicki Stadames
Headteacher	Julie Perks
Annual fees (day pupils)	£58,000
Telephone number	01305 781400
Website	www.potens-uk.com
Email address	arbouradmin@potens-education.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 to 28 June 2018

Information about this school

- Arbour House is a special school which provides education for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, complex personal, social and emotional health issues and learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils attend from a number of local authorities across the region.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- Since the last inspection, the school applied for a material change to increase the number of pupils the school could accommodate and the age range of pupils. The capacity now stands at 25 and the school takes pupils from the age of 6 to 18.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School, Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the regional director and chief executive of Potens and the chair of the governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and PSHE, including living skills. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and regional director to evaluate the school's safeguarding procedures and to check safeguarding records, including the school's single central record.
- Inspectors carried out a range of activities to confirm whether the independent school standards were met in full. Activities included: consideration of the site and premises, scrutinising the information the school provides to parents, including the complaints policy, and records and considering how well leaders ensure that pupils' health, safety and welfare are protected.
- Inspectors considered responses to the staff survey, spoke to parents either face to face or on the telephone and took into account the free-text responses from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Heather Barraclough, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Aykin

Her Majesty's Inspector

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