

Arbour House

15 Glendinning Avenue, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 7QF

Inspection dates

26–28 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher has quickly created a cohesive teaching, learning and pastoral team. The team's combined educational and social care skills ensure that pupils make good progress in their personal development and academic outcomes.
- Suitable policies and procedures to guide the work of this new school have been firmly established by the proprietors. This ensures that all independent standards are met.
- Staff know their pupils very well. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They plan interesting and engaging lessons that support pupils' learning well. This helps pupils to make good progress in relation to their starting points.
- Pupils make strong progress in their emotional development and gain confidence to try new experiences. Staff steadily build pupils' emotional resilience.
- A major strength of the school is the personalised curriculum which is based on the needs of the individual pupils.
- Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. Pupils are safe in school and confident that staff care about their well-being.
- Staff have established strong and effective working relationships with parents and carers. This cooperation enables them to respond well to pupils' changing needs.
- The school makes good use of the local area to support the pupils' learning. Nevertheless, the headteacher and governors are fully aware of the need to improve the resourcing of both the internal and external learning areas within the school.
- Governors use their social care expertise very effectively to support the personal, social, emotional and health education of the pupils. However, they acknowledge that they need to develop a greater understanding of the educational aspects of school provision.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the role of the governors by deepening their knowledge and understanding of educational provision.
- Improve outcomes further by:
 - developing the resourcing of the school's indoor and outdoor learning spaces for the pupils
 - ensuring that appropriate resources are made available to maximise the pupils' experiences.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Following the appointment of the new headteacher, there has been a complete and profound change in all aspects of school life. Her vision and determination to provide the highest standards of education and care for all pupils is ensuring that they flourish and achieve well in a safe environment.
- School leaders are making a good start to the development of a successful school. The blend of educational and social care expertise ensures that there is a well-balanced professional approach. The school has good capacity for further improvement.
- The proprietors, through the board that governs the school, support and challenge the headteacher to bring her vision to life. They ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- A wide variety of skilled teaching and non-teaching staff and specialists in health and social care have been thoughtfully employed by proprietors to effectively support every aspect of the pupils' development.
- Shortly after her arrival, the headteacher undertook a detailed audit of the school's provision. Carefully prioritising those areas that required urgent improvement, she has systematically addressed these. Appropriate arrangements for the review of the performance and training needs for staff have been implemented, and monitoring systems are in place.
- Staff feel valued and their morale is high. This is because the headteacher is providing them with structures, routines and professional development opportunities. They report that there have been 'massive changes since her arrival ... the school is going from strength to strength ... she is doing a fantastic job'.
- Staff are fully committed to their pupils and live out the school's values in their day-to-day interactions with pupils. They are skilled at managing pupils who have presented high levels of challenge in other schools. Staff support their pupils to grow in self-esteem, feel safe in school and make good progress in their learning.
- The school provides very successful individual teaching for each pupil. Staff have a good understanding of the learning characteristics, strengths and interests of each pupil. They develop strong trusting relationships with the pupils. This develops their confidence and willingness to try new experiences.
- Individual learning areas give good support to pupils' development. The facilities available in the surrounding area of the school are used well to promote their learning. For example, pupils make regular use of the local library, swimming facilities and gyms. Older pupils who have a particular interest in animal care, maintenance work and volunteering are provided with opportunities to develop their skills. Nevertheless, leaders are fully aware of the need to provide more resources in the internal and external learning areas within the school.
- The school keeps detailed records of all pupils and their individual needs. Education, health and care (EHC) plans for all pupils are well documented and carefully followed. Records of each individual pupil's behaviour and starting points are thorough and provide

a reliable basis for discussing their academic and social progress. Before pupils join the school, leaders work closely with parents and other stakeholders to gather information. This assists with the smooth and extremely thoughtful transition process.

- Pupils learn about risks to their well-being and how to manage them. This, along with their regular attendance at school and re-engagement with learning, helps them to keep safe.
- Staff promote British values well within the context of strong arrangements for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities for pupils to vote and make decisions on rewards and special treats enable them to develop an understanding of the society in which they live. The school promotes diversity and equality well. It has an inclusive ethos and takes positive steps to enable pupils to overcome any barriers to their individual success.
- Leaders work closely with a wide range of outside agencies and teams to re-engage pupils in their learning, develop their self-esteem and promote their social and emotional well-being. As a consequence, pupils attend and behave well, and make good progress overall.
- Establishing strong links with parents effectively supports the pupils' learning and personal development. For example, using 'chat' books between home and school helps parents understand how they can support and extend their children's progress at home.

Governance

- The expertise of highly knowledgeable and experienced social care specialists employed by the proprietors is having a developing impact on the strategic governance of the school.
- Governors do not hold back from making significant changes that improve the effectiveness of the school.
- Nevertheless, those governors with this extensive expertise in social care fully recognise the need to develop a greater understanding of educational provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of shared responsibility for protecting pupils. Consequently, pupils are safe and well supported.
- Leaders have ensured that a good-quality safeguarding and child protection policy is available on the website. The safeguarding policy and practice are robust and meet current government guidelines.
- Staff are appropriately trained in all aspects of safeguarding. Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns and ensuring that they inform outside agencies when they are worried that a pupil might be at risk. Staff keep appropriate records that detail safeguarding concerns and actions. Staff are well trained to recognise signs of extremism or radicalisation.
- The building is well maintained and kept to an appropriate safe standard, with clear access to doors in case of fire. Regular checks are made on the building for fire risks and other safety hazards.

- Leaders rigorously maintain risk assessments for all aspects of school life and for individual pupils where necessary. This includes detailed risk assessments of all off-site facilities that the pupils use.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils arrive at Arbour House often having previously suffered unhappy educational experiences where they were unable to cope with the environment and social relationships. A significant proportion of them have received little or no education for an extensive period of time. Although the school receives detailed records of pupils' personal, social and emotional needs, they often have no information about their prior attainment.
- Initially, each pupil is carefully assessed in their home environment before starting school. Based on this assessment, teachers plan an individualised timetable and approach for each pupil. Transition into school is carefully managed so that pupils' needs are carefully understood. Staff work effectively with individual pupils and help to fill the gaps in their previous learning.
- Teaching staff have specialist knowledge and understanding of the specific needs of the young people they support. They establish strong, trusting relationships with pupils, and this enables the pupils to take risks and try new experiences.
- The school provides safe study spaces where pupils are helped to address individual difficulties, such as self-regulation and anxiety.
- Teachers plan effective learning experiences which are linked to the needs and interests of the pupils. For example, topics which pupils have a particular interest in, such as the First and Second World Wars, fishing and boat-making, are used effectively as pathways for them to develop their literacy skills.
- The extensive use of clear signage around the school helps pupils to extend their vocabulary and support their reading skills.
- Clear objectives for learning are identified for each session and discussed with the pupils. Teaching staff are very experienced in recognising when a pupil needs additional time to process, review and consolidate learning.
- Teaching staff help pupils to develop their numeracy skills during practical sessions, such as shopping for food technology sessions. They are encouraged to work out how much money they will need before they go shopping for the ingredients. Once out at the local shops, they have to ensure that they receive the correct change back from their purchases. Pupils are also required to measure and weigh out ingredients and record what they have done during the lesson.
- Older pupils are taught life skills well at a pace suitable for them.
- Teaching staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement in learning. Pupils are questioned frequently to support them as they process their learning and deepen their understanding. They provide ongoing oral feedback to pupils and identify the next steps in their learning. Teaching staff follow the school's agreed approach to marking in the pupils' books. This approach supports pupils' learning effectively.
- A new process for assessing pupils' learning has recently been introduced, and teaching staff recognise that this will provide greater consistency across the curriculum.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils make strong progress in managing their personal anxieties and emotional barriers to learning. This is a result of the quality of the individual care and strong personal relationships within the school. This enables them to develop confidence in themselves and in their ability to succeed. Given the previous negative learning experiences of the pupils, this approach takes considerable patience and sensitive support from staff. This they manage with success.
- Pupils are happy and enjoy school. They respond well to the individual teaching arrangements and the attention given to their emotional sensitivities.
- The school's approach to personal, social and emotional development enables staff to pay particular attention to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Clear rewards and sanctions enable pupils to recognise the difference between right and wrong. If any pupil displays an inappropriate attitude, staff use it as a learning point to help pupils consider their response and reflect on their views.
- Pupils are encouraged to take an interest in opportunities beyond their immediate environment. For example, educational outings to a tank museum and other historical places of interest help them to gain a deeper understanding of their heritage. A local aquarium is a firm favourite with pupils who are interested in creatures that live in the sea.
- High levels of individual supervision contribute effectively to pupils' safety. The school is a secure environment in which all adults place a very high priority on pupils' well-being. Both teaching and non-teaching staff work continually to improve pupils' awareness of e-safety and risks within the wider community.
- Pupils learn about safe and healthy lifestyles. They discuss what they eat and drink and develop an awareness of what constitutes a healthy diet. They are encouraged to exercise regularly, and older pupils benefit from their sessions at the gym or boxing lessons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils, all with disrupted histories of education, settle well into school life. Misbehaviour diminishes quickly as pupils develop and they build strong relationships. This helps them develop skills and to interact positively with the adults supporting them. Consequently, they learn to manage themselves increasingly well. Conduct is generally positive during lessons and around school. At lunchtimes, staff and pupils enjoy conversations together in a calm atmosphere.
- When pupils struggle to manage themselves, effective supervision and sensitive responses from staff enable pupils to calm themselves and re-engage with learning quickly.
- Many pupils have a history of persistent absence from school or have been missing in education for some time. The improvements in their attendance rates are a true testament to the dedication and hard work of staff who settle them into school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Due to the complex needs of the pupils and the breakdown in their previous educational placements, they are working well below age-related expectations. Nevertheless, all pupils make the progress that is expected of them by the school, with some making accelerated progress. This is measured against their academic and personal development targets, which are created according to their needs.
- All pupils make very good progress in their personal development. This is because staff are highly skilled in the management of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. They enable pupils to feel secure, start to self-regulate their behaviour, gain confidence and enjoy their learning.
- Pupils in key stages 2 and 3 make good progress in English, mathematics and science. This is because teachers plan effective individualised learning programmes which focus appropriately on filling in the missing gaps in pupils' education. For example, teaching staff focus heavily on consolidating number skills to ensure that the pupils have grasped basic mathematical concepts.
- Pupils are encouraged to read for a purpose and this is achieved by labels and posters which provide information for them. For example, all kitchen equipment is clearly labelled, which helps with the extension of the pupils' vocabulary and word recognition. Teaching staff work hard to encourage the pupils to enjoy reading both for pleasure and for fact-finding. Regular trips to the local library, coupled with an emphasis on sharing high-quality texts, have a good impact in engaging the pupils' interest.
- Pupils in key stages 4 and 5 make good progress in learning the skills they need to live independently. They learn to cook, clean and look after themselves. Opportunities for careers advice help them to consider the next stage of their education. This is skilfully achieved at a level which suitably meets the complex needs of individuals. They become engaged in activities which interest them and provide them with vocational learning opportunities. For example, volunteering to work with animals or helping the school caretaker with his maintenance activities enables the older pupils to make good progress learning about the world of work.
- Pupils who are looked after make the same progress as others, because teachers and staff personalise challenge and support them effectively.

School details

Unique reference number	143642
DfE registration number	835/6039
Inspection number	10047187

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

Type of school	Independent special school
School category	Independent
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Proprietor	Potens
Chair	Lisa Alcorn
Headteacher	Julie Perks
Annual fees (day pupils)	£51,000
Telephone number	01305 781400
Website	Potens-uk.com
Email address	arbouradmin@potens-uk.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Arbour House was first registered with the Department for Education in June 2017 and opened in September 2017. This was the school's first standard inspection since opening.
- It is a day special school which provides education for boys and girls with autism spectrum disorder, complex personal, social and emotional health issues and learning difficulties. There are currently nine pupils aged eight to 18.
- The pupil population of the school is drawn from a number of local authorities across the region.
- The school does not make use of other alternative education provision.
- A new headteacher commenced her role in April 2018.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector toured the premises and scrutinised risk assessments of the school building.
- The inspector undertook a learning walk with the headteacher. She observed a small number of lessons for a short time. The inspector also looked at pupils' work.
- The inspector scrutinised schemes of work and lesson plans as well as a variety of documents about pupils and safeguarding. She scrutinised risk assessments for individual pupils and for external visits.
- The inspector made observations of pupils as they moved around the school and during lunchtime.
- The inspector held a meeting with the regional director and the director of operations for Potens, who is also the chair of the governing body. She also held meetings with the headteacher and the positive behaviour support facilitator who works for the company across the south west.
- The inspector spoke with pupils informally during the school day.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' books, schemes of work and lesson plans. She also looked at a variety of documents about pupils' progress.
- The inspector took account of the 13 staff responses to the inspection questionnaire. There were not enough responses from Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire for them to be reviewed. However, the inspector considered the views collected by the school following their recent response to a school questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lorna Brackstone, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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