

Inspection of a good school: The Polygon School

Handel Terrace, Southampton, Hampshire SO15 2FH

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 March 2022

Outcome

The Polygon School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming school. Staff are very caring and supportive. Parents and carers appreciate the help staff give to them and to their children. Staff understand pupils' individual needs well. Everyone strives to help pupils find success at school.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education or employment. This is because leaders make sure that pupils' futures are central to all decision-making. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils know staff will look after them and help them to learn. Staff are very skilled in meeting the pupils' complex needs. Leaders have high expectations that pupils will use the clear routines they learn to help them tackle challenges independently.

Pupils' behaviour is good. They are considerate of each other's needs and engage very well with their learning. They have positive attitudes to their education. Pupils feel safe and happy. They are confident that if bullying happens, staff will deal with it quickly and effectively.

Leaders make sure that all pupils can take part in a wide range of clubs and activities that inspire and interest them. For example, pupils get the opportunity for international travel.

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

Leaders and governors have high ambitions for all pupils. As a result, staff work well together to create an environment in which pupils can succeed, as they know that some have found school difficult before.

Leaders and teachers choose carefully what pupils should learn. They have constructed a broad, relevant and interesting curriculum for pupils to study. From the time pupils join the school, there is a focus on the key routines and knowledge which pupils will need in

all aspects of their life. An example of this is the attention staff give to helping pupils build their reading skills.

Teachers understand how to support pupils to make progress through the curriculum. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They plan lessons which build on pupils' skills and knowledge over time. They make sure that pupils have opportunities to remember what they have been taught before. This is successful in developing pupils' confidence and in helping them remember the routines and concepts they have learned. Teachers make sure that pupils have the right level of support in lessons. Pupils are very clear about what is expected of them.

In personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, useful links between other subjects help pupils to remember more. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of smoking and addiction and make links to how this might affect their ability to perform in physical education. However, this joined-up approach is not yet developed across the whole curriculum.

Pupils often join the school having had problems managing their behaviour and emotions in previous settings. The Polygon School quickly takes steps to help them behave calmly. There is an ethos of respect throughout the school community. Pupils know the consequences of their behaviour and they are motivated by the rewards for behaving well. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently. If pupils disturb lessons, staff deal with this quickly and effectively so that it does not escalate.

Leaders have made pupils' wider development a priority. Pupils have regular lessons in PSHE, and have well-established routines that allow them to experience success. Across the curriculum, and at social times, they learn about healthy relationships and are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Leaders and governors are conscious of teachers' workload and take practical steps to reduce the hours teachers spend on site. The vast majority of staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a detailed understanding of pupils' needs and circumstances. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and they are aware of the issues most likely to affect pupils. In addition to formal training, staff receive regular safeguarding updates during daily briefings and debriefings. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. Leaders have good relationships with external agencies and make use of their expertise to support pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Currently, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum enables pupils to make consistently meaningful links between what pupils learn in discrete subjects. This means that some pupils do not readily connect with and apply knowledge they have gained in different subjects and contexts. Leaders need to build on their good work in PSHE to enable pupils to make meaningful links across the curriculum. This will help pupils to remember curriculum content and learn more deeply.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2016.

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

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	116624
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10200480
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrea Faustino
Headteacher	Anne Hendon-John
Website	www.polygon.southampton.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and moderate learning difficulties, including pupils with autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is located on two sites. There is a main school building and an engagement centre, called Morris House.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at three providers as part of their extended package.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and subject leaders. Inspectors also met with three members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. They checked the school's record of recruitment checks and spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors considered parents' responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text responses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, art and design and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Gary Tostevin, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Long

Her Majesty's Inspector

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