

Inspection of Dibden Park School

Main Road, Dibden, Southampton, Hampshire SO45 5TD

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 July 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

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

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming and inclusive school where everyone is valued for who they are and for their unique qualities. Many pupils have missed parts of their education and not been in a classroom environment for a significant period of time. The school's carefully planned transition programme on entry helps pupils to learn the routines and requirements of school life. This helps to prepare them for future learning as they progress within the school.

Social times are happy occasions. Pupils chat animatedly with their peers and with members of staff. The range of activities on offer helps pupils to develop their social skills by interacting positively with one another. This includes learning how to lose when playing board games as well as playing as a team in the school's multi-use games area.

Behaviour is generally calm throughout the school. Some pupils need more support than others to regulate their own emotions, which staff provide. Learning how to stay safe is threaded through the school. Pupils are taught how to use technology safely, with any issues addressed swiftly. Pupils talk about the new-found confidence they have since joining the school. They are supported well to achieve across the curriculum and experience academic success.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious for every pupil and based on their very specific needs. Staff understand that some pupils have significant gaps in their learning due to their fragmented education before joining Dibden Park. With this in mind, the school has carefully devised a curriculum which is as broad as possible for as long as possible. As a result, pupils' options are not narrowed. They are well supported to access the most appropriate qualification route to allow them to achieve well. Teachers know their subjects well. They model tasks effectively so pupils understand what they need to do in order to be successful. Sometimes, however, staff are not clear enough about how to help pupils take the small steps needed to achieve their targets.

Strong relationships underpin the school's ethos. Staff take time to build these relationships and ensure they understand the needs of each pupil. They tailor their approach in lessons with clear thought for pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. They expertly question pupils to check their understanding as well as help fill gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils are highly engaged by the specialist teaching in specific subjects. They are keen to share their finished outcomes in design and technology, art and food technology. There is a firm focus on ensuring pupils learn how to read. Those who need to are accessing the school's phonics programme. Staff support these pupils expertly and are helping them to become confident readers. Across the school, pupils talk about the books they are reading.

The careers programme is a strength of the school. It mirrors the ambition seen throughout subjects. Staff provide a wealth of information for pupils about possible careers. They also support pupils successfully to understand what qualifications they might need to reach their own career goals in the future. This helps pupils to be motivated and enthusiastic as well as set targets for themselves. Trips and visits complement the school's curriculum offer. Pupils keenly discuss the places they have visited and what they learned. They are proud to represent the school through the school council as well as sporting tournaments. These roles help to build a sense of belonging for pupils.

There is a robust focus on maintaining positive behaviour. The school recognises that for some pupils this can be a challenge. Staff help pupils to understand boundaries and why these are important. Staff support pupils well when they are struggling with these concepts. In lessons, pupils' behaviour does not usually disturb the learning of others. However, some staff, pupils, parents and carers do not fully understand the school's approach to managing behaviour, which impacts on how consistently expectations are applied and followed. Attendance is monitored rigorously. The school knows that some pupils have been out of education until this year and subsequently struggle with the demand of full-time education. Successful strategies are helping pupils with this so they can attend in line with the school's expectations.

The proprietor and governing body have a clear understanding of the school. Strong systems and procedures are in place for monitoring the effectiveness of the provision. This ensures a strong oversight from the proprietor and that the independent school standards are met consistently. The school makes good use of support within the proprietor body company. There is a robust training programme for staff. They make good use of this. Sometimes staff feel that school systems duplicate work. Plans are in place to streamline some procedures so they are less burdensome.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Short term targets have not been precisely identified from pupils' education, health and care plans. As a result, staff do not always know how best to support pupils to make small steps of progress towards the identified end points. The school should continue to refine the targets set for pupils, so that adults can tailor the provision more precisely.
- The school's approach to behaviour management is not fully understood by all. This means that there is not always a consistent approach in the way this is implemented. The school should continue to support staff, pupils, parents and

carers to understand their approach to managing behaviour, so that expectations are shared and achieved consistently well.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	149863
DfE registration number	850/6111
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10322081
Type of school	Special school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	Richard Power
Headteacher	Matthew Robinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£63,000
Telephone number	02380 177 958
Website	www.dibdenparkschool.co.uk
Email address	info@dibdenparkschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school provides full-time education for pupils aged 8 to 16 years. At the time of the inspection, the pupils on roll were aged 10 to 15 years. Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority. All pupils an education, health and care plan. All pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provider.

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 the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 other leaders and staff. The lead inspector held meetings with the chair of the proprietor body and two members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She held a telephone call with one provider of alternative provision.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in English, humanities and physical education. To do this, they met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders and staff; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- The lead inspector toured the school site to gather evidence about compliance with the standards. Inspectors also reviewed a range of other documents and policies, including on the school's website.

Inspection team

Sara Staggs, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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