

Inspection of Dudley Port School

Station Drive, Tipton, West Midlands DY4 7QR

Inspection dates: 22–24 June 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

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?

Pupils who have not engaged in formal education for a considerable time enjoy coming to school. They say that this school is different because teachers understand them and help them to learn.

Leaders and all staff want and expect the very best for everyone. Staff know the pupils well. They understand pupils' needs and know how to help them learn. They use individual strategies and approaches that work for the pupils. For some pupils, this is the first time they have experienced success at school.

Staff teach pupils to be aspirational. Pupils therefore want to do well. Parents and carers are extremely proud of the qualifications and skills their children have gained since starting at the school. They say that the school has helped their children to 'believe in themselves when nobody else did'.

Pupils generally behave well. Any bullying is dealt with swiftly. Pupils feel happy and safe at school and say that there is always someone they can talk to. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are a key strength of the school. Staff are genuinely interested in the pupils. They provide high-quality experiences beyond the academic curriculum to make sure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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

The headteacher has successfully embedded a shared vision and ethos. Providing a good education is part of the school's mission to give pupils positive options for their futures. Leaders and all staff are relentlessly ambitious that every pupil will leave with a range of purposeful qualifications regardless of their starting points. To this end, the curriculum has been developed beyond academic learning to make sure that pupils develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Pupils engage well with these opportunities.

Teaching in the core subjects is well planned towards ambitious end points for pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. They know the needs of their pupils well and make appropriate adaptations to learning to enable all pupils to reach their potential. In some subjects, such as history and geography, the curriculum is less well established. Pupils receive a rich introduction to these subjects, but their knowledge is not as well developed as leaders want it to be. Detailed plans are in place to improve these subjects.

Pupils generally arrive as reluctant readers. Leaders place high importance on developing pupils' fluency and confidence in reading. Leaders create many opportunities across the curriculum to encourage pupils to read aloud in small groups and on their own. All staff work hard to reignite a love of reading by creating a language-rich environment. Pupils enjoy listening to stories. They speak enthusiastically about the choice of texts within the English curriculum, including 'Of

Mice and Men' and 'Holes'. Pupils say that when reading a book, they 'cannot wait to see what is going to happen next'.

Leaders are reflective. They know the school's strengths and what needs to improve. The headteacher has developed an innovative approach to quality assurance. This practice is well embedded and ensures that all staff focus on improvement through weekly planned activities. As a result, all staff know exactly where the school needs to strive for further improvement.

Contributing positively to pupils' personal development is the school's key driver. Striving for academic success is not an end in itself, according to leaders. Staff go the extra mile to make sure that pupils access a wide range of rich experiences. The exemplary character education programme systematically teaches pupils resilience, self-awareness, self-esteem, physical and mental health awareness, and healthy relationships. It helps pupils face the challenges of their situations and supports them to prepare for opportunities, experiences and future responsibilities well.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their own leadership skills. Pupils on the school council take their role seriously. Pupils engage well with the local community. They express strong views on the impact of poverty, homelessness and hunger and genuinely want to help others. The school has identified five key charities to support, including local food banks and the Alzheimer's Society. Pupils engage regularly in activities to help these organisations. They feel strongly about these issues and say that they want to make change.

Pupils start to work towards their career aspirations right at the beginning of their induction to the school. The careers programme puts pupils' interests at the heart of curriculum and personal development programmes. Pupils are well supported in school to make informed choices and to achieve their goals. For example, some have chosen to explore careers in social care to enable them to engage with and help vulnerable people.

The proprietor and those responsible for governance know the school well. They regularly check that the school is meeting its statutory requirements. They provide appropriate support and challenge for school leaders. The school meets all of the independent school standards. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The designated safeguarding lead, a deputy and other key staff are appropriately trained. This ensures that the role is consistently covered. Leaders are aware of local risks to pupils. They make sure that the curriculum teaches pupils about these dangers. Processes are robust. High levels of vigilance mean that staff know pupils well. Staff know about indicators of abuse, neglect, radicalisation, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. They are quick to act on concerns. The safeguarding policy is available on the school's website and in paper format.

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

- In subjects where the implementation of the curriculum is not yet fully embedded, planning does not take into account the core knowledge of the curriculum. This means that a few pupils are unable to recall what they have previously been taught. Leaders' plans show that they have carefully considered how they can help pupils to learn more and remember more over time and are in the process of bringing this about. Leaders need to ensure that these planned improvements are implemented successfully within the next year.
- In the core subjects, where the curriculum is fully embedded and adapted, pupils demonstrate strong engagement and a high commitment to their learning. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum for all subjects is implemented well so that pupils are motivated and committed to their work.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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	147736
DfE registration number	333/6016
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10195170
Type of school	Independent school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Horizon Care and Education Group Ltd
Chair	Paul Callander
Headteacher	Daryl Hill
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,000–£52,250
Telephone number	0121 557 7455
Website	www.horizoncareandeducation.co.uk
Email address	Daryl.Hill@horizoncare.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Dudley Port School is an independent day school. It offers up to 30 places to pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is part of the Horizon Care and Education group. The school was originally operating as an annex provision for another independent school within the group. A pre-registration inspection took place in July 2020, and as a result, the school was registered by the Department for Education as a separate independent school.
- Pupils are placed at the school via referrals from local authorities including Sandwell, Birmingham and Wolverhampton.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and managing director of education. Meetings were also held with a number of teaching staff.
- A premises tour was completed to check the school's compliance with part 5 of the independent school standards.
- The inspection followed the deep dive methodology, involving meetings with subject leaders, visits to lessons, reviewing work in books and talking with pupils about their educational experiences. We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and humanities.
- The lead inspector met with those responsible for safeguarding, reviewed the school's processes for reporting and recording incidents and scrutinised the school's policy. Views of pupils, parents and the local authority were also taken into account.
- The inspection team reviewed a number of key documents and policies, including safeguarding, anti-bullying, complaints, behaviour and the curriculum policy. The school's development plans were also discussed.

Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Sandy Hayes Her Majesty's Inspector

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