

Inspection of Fair Ways School

New Road, Swanwick, Southampton, Hampshire SO31 7HE

Inspection dates: 2 to 4 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Fair Ways is a unique and vibrant school. Pupils who arrive at the school have often had a hard journey to get here. Many have gaps in their schooling, and some feel rejected by the education system. The Fair Ways School gives these pupils a fresh start and an opportunity to reignite their passion for learning. Here, pupils can pursue their interests, celebrate success and make mistakes without the fear of ridicule or embarrassment.

The school is nurturing and safe. Pupils are taught to manage 'big feelings' and are given the space, support and dignity to regulate themselves, control their emotions and learn from their experiences. Friendly staff are on hand to help pupils at every step. Pupils, rightly, have great faith in the staff to help them to make good decisions. The trust that pupils place in the adults is hard-earned, and staff treat this with care. These strong relationships help pupils to feel safe and to make the most of their time at school.

Pupils are closely supervised. Their interactions are carefully managed, which helps them to form warm and appropriate friendships with others. Bullying is extremely rare and identified quickly to prevent things from getting out of hand.

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

Leaders have devised a curriculum that helps pupils to make up for lost time. Staff work incredibly hard to find out what pupils know already and their ambitions for the future. Using this, they design a curriculum that fills in the gaps in pupils' knowledge and builds on their understanding. Staff are patient, knowledgeable and provide clear instructions. This helps pupils to understand and complete challenging work.

Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are considered at every stage. Staff adapt the curriculum to make sure pupils achieve their communication, social and emotional targets as they develop academically. Some pupils arrive at the school unable to read as well as they should. Despite their best efforts, staff's expertise in teaching early reading is not fully developed. This is because staff do not have the specialist resources or training to precisely identify and quickly address gaps in pupils' early phonics knowledge.

Pupils study a broad curriculum. Every curriculum subject is tailored to their starting point, and pupils work towards ambitious goals. This helps pupils to achieve well, gaining qualifications that will help them to take their next steps in education and employment. Staff don't rush pupils. For example, rather than tackling all of their GCSE qualifications in Year 11, students in Years 12 and 13 continue to work towards these exams, gradually building their qualifications each year. By doing fewer things well, pupils build their competence and confidence in a range of subjects and achieve highly.

By the time they are ready to leave, students have the right qualifications and knowledge to take their next steps. They are prepared to study independently, travel safely and make and maintain strong friendships. Pupils receive extensive careers guidance and are supported to plan for their future, helping them feel settled during these times of change. Staff only stop supporting students when they are ready, accompanying them in the initial weeks of college then slowly withdrawing when students are ready to stand on their own two feet.

Staff expect pupils to do their best at all times. Lessons are calm and purposeful. When pupils do become distracted, staff quickly get them back on track. The time staff spend getting to know pupils is put to good use. Staff always know exactly what incentive or reward will get the best out of pupils. Around the school, pupils are polite, courteous and curious. They are welcoming to visitors and respectful towards each other.

Pupils delight in the range of experiences they encounter at school. They learn to ride a bike, swim confidently and compete in competitions against other schools. Pupils cook delicious, healthy meals with flair and confidence and know the effect that diet and exercise have on their physical health. Pupils learn that others will think, look and act differently from them and to value these differences. This broadens their understanding of the world around them and strengthens their capacity to navigate different communities and people.

Despite a period of instability in leadership, the school has continued to offer a high quality of education and care for pupils. Leaders have drawn on capacity from the wider organisation to continue their planned improvements. Junior staff have progressed through the Fair Ways training scheme, gaining qualifications that have improved their effectiveness and paved the way for their promotion. Staff's retention rates and morale are high.

In 2021, the main school building was largely destroyed by fire. Leaders quickly put in place suitable and welcoming accommodation which provides plenty of space for pupils to learn. The new site is well maintained, tidy and safe. Leaders have taken care to learn lessons from this incident, bolstering the risk assessment and maintenance procedures. Directors regularly check that these protocols are followed, further instilling a culture of diligence and responsibility.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Checks on staff's suitability are thorough and completed promptly. Staff receive comprehensive training in safeguarding and the school's systems for reporting concerns. Staff use a single programme to record behaviour, safeguarding and attendance information, and leaders monitor this closely to identify emerging patterns at an early stage. Leaders share concerns efficiently with external agencies and contribute to plans to keep pupils safe.

Pupils are taught to manage risks. This work is proactive and often addresses dangers that pupils have become accustomed to. Staff help pupils recalibrate their view of risks, so they make more informed decisions in the future.

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

- Staff do not possess a strong understanding of the strategies needed to teach phonics and early reading effectively. Sometimes, they use techniques to assess and support pupils to read which are either inefficient or confusing. Leaders should ensure that staff receive effective training so that they can identify and address gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge.

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	135240
DfE registration number	850/6088
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10214657
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Fair Ways Community Benefit Society
Chair	Mac McHugh
Headteacher	Laura Rowe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£90,343
Telephone number	01489579011
Website	www.fairways.co
Email address	admin@fairways-school.org
Date of previous inspection	23 to 25 January 2018

Information about this school

- Fair Ways is an independent special school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs and/or autism spectrum disorder. The majority of pupils have missed a significant amount of time in school previously.
- The school operates across two sites in Swanwick and Fareham in Hampshire.
- All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and representatives of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, computing and physical education. Inspectors talked to subject leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors then considered a wider range of evidence to explore the effectiveness of the curriculum. These took place over both school sites.
- The inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records, interviewing staff and having discussions with pupils.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents shared through the Ofsted surveys. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Daniel Lambert, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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