

Dryden School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131200
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	381316
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2012
Lead inspector	Marian Thomas

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Holliday
Headteacher	Becky Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2009
School address	Shotley Gardens Low Fell Gateshead NE9 5UR
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Marian Thomas
Bobbi Mothersdale

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 11 teachers and teaching assistants teaching 15 lessons and parts of lessons, four of which were joint observations with members of the senior team. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the representatives of the governing body, and school staff including senior managers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, the safeguarding and equality policies, and minutes of the governing body's meetings. They observed reading activities in three classes and analysed 27 parents' and carers' questionnaires. They also analysed other questionnaires completed by pupils and staff. No responses from the online questionnaire (Parent View) were available to the inspectors.

Information about the school

Dryden School is a small secondary special school for pupils and students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19 years of age. Pupils and students come from across the Metropolitan Borough of Gateshead. Currently, 44% of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and 9% of pupils are from ethnic minority groups. There are currently three children in the care of the local authority. Since September 2011, Dryden School and Hill Top School have formed a 'soft federation' (Joint Collaboration) with an executive headteacher in post across the two schools, which continue to be separate schools with separate governing bodies. The school became a specialist business and enterprise college in September 2010 and is developing partnerships with several schools and a college.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Dryden is a good school. The complex needs of its learners are met skilfully and pupils make good progress academically. A caring ethos, coupled with outstanding provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, enables pupils to make good gains in personal development. The sixth form is also good and provides a wide range of innovative activities and accreditation opportunities which prepare students well for future life.
- Pupils joining the school are working at levels much lower than those expected for their age. Because their needs are met effectively, all groups make equally good progress and achievement is good overall. However, pupils are not currently sufficiently involved in setting their own targets for learning and, as a result, they do not always recognise what they have achieved or how to improve their work.
- Behaviour is good and pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe. The school has gained an excellent reputation for its work with pupils with additional needs including emotional and or behavioural difficulties. These pupils respond particularly well to the provision.
- Good teaching is based on teachers' accurate understanding of the curriculum and the effective use of detailed assessment. This ensures learning matches the needs of all pupils well. Teaching assistants provide skilled support in lessons.
- Leadership and management are good. The school is a harmonious, cohesive community, where all are valued. The safety of all pupils is at the heart of the school's ethos. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly. However, the recording of details of risks in some practical lessons is not always undertaken as rigorously as it could be. The vast majority of parents and carers are exceptionally pleased with the provision made for their children.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate achievement overall by ensuring pupils understand what they will learn and how to improve their work by:
 - involving pupils directly in setting their own learning targets
 - improving systems for recording pupils' progress so that they are able to recognise their achievements.

- Ensuring that the recording of risk assessments in practical lesson planning is implemented rigorously.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Inspection findings endorse the views of parents and carers that their children are making good progress. Pupils joining the school are working at levels much lower than those expected for their age. This is because of their high levels of medical, social and academic needs. Once they settle into the nurturing and supportive environment of the school, barriers to learning are minimised and all groups, including students in the sixth form, make equally good progress. This represents good achievement overall. In lessons, pupils' learning is good and they respond well to their individual learning programmes which enable them all to access even the most creative elements of the curriculum. This could clearly be seen in a lesson where pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were experiencing the skills required to make bread. The teaching assistants leading the lesson passed each utensil and ingredient painstakingly to the pupils allowing them to feel, smell and, in the case of flour, experiment with the texture. As a result, all enjoyed the multisensory approach to learning and participated willingly, meeting their lesson targets well. Staff set challenging learning targets for pupils throughout the school and the majority make good progress towards these. However, pupils are not currently involved in this process and, as a result, do not always recognise what they have achieved or how to improve their work. Senior leaders recognise this and plan to implement systems which will help pupils to understand their targets. However, this work is at an early stage of development.

The majority of students who attend the school's post-16 provision have attended the main school. Their successful and happy transition to the sixth form is aided by the prior knowledge of staff, who are skilled at meeting their needs. This, combined with an exciting and varied curriculum, which includes a very good level of personal challenge, ensures that pupils make good academic progress alongside their outstanding spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

Quality of teaching

Assessment of pupils' needs is rigorous and informs planning for learning well. This could clearly be seen in a physical education lesson in which pupils with varying levels of mobility competed to collect as many items as they could. Pupils' mathematical skills of counting and number recognition were promoted well through competitive scoring of points and great care in planning the activity ensured individual learning targets were achieved. Much laughter and lively competition demonstrated clearly pupils' high levels of enjoyment and engagement with learning. Reading and writing activities are appropriately planned and much effort is made to develop pupils' communication skills at all levels. The vast majority of teachers plan lessons conscientiously and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve across the curriculum. However, very occasionally, planning for learning lacks consistency and as a result, pupils finish work too quickly or a lesson overruns in time and the end is rushed. When this happens, learning slows. Teaching assistants' time is planned effectively and pupils throughout the school are well supported and learning time is maximised. Sixth-form students are taught equally well. Teachers promote the innovative sixth-form curriculum successfully, emphasising the development of skills for the future. The impact of this is evidenced in the highly successful café, which is run by students as part of an enterprise initiative. Teaching has a positive impact also on the development of pupils' cultural awareness, for example, through links with a school in Uganda. This contributes exceptionally well to furthering pupils' understanding of other communities and has contributed to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Classrooms are organised well with vibrant displays contributing to learning. The management of pupils with complex behavioural or medical needs is excellent and, as a result, the majority of pupils show good attitudes to learning. The majority of parents and carers agree with inspection findings and feel teaching is good. A comment made by one sums up the views of the majority: 'Staff work tirelessly to support pupils and their efforts are over and above what you would expect.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Overall, parents and carers agree that pupils' behaviour is good. The inspection found that behaviour of the majority is impeccable. Pupils who arrive with identified emotional and behavioural needs often make great strides in managing their behaviour during the time they are in school. Pupils say behaviour is good for the majority of the time and are well aware of what to do if they encounter difficulties with others. This tolerant and empathetic approach helps staff to reduce interruptions to learning in the classroom. There have been few exclusions since the last inspection. Pupils care for each other and support each other well, particularly the most potentially vulnerable. They respond exceptionally well to the provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through taking part in clubs, visits, work experience and personal, social and health education, they are well prepared for the next phase in life. Pupils say they feel safe in school and the majority have a good understanding of, for example, right and wrong, and the needs of others. Instances of any type of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly. Pupils' attendance is good, despite their complex medical needs, and absence is rare.

without a legitimate reason. Pupils of all ages, clearly, enjoy school and are keen to learn and achieve.

Leadership and management

The highly effective leadership of the executive headteacher and senior leaders continues to improve the school and to ensure good outcomes for pupils. This, coupled with effective partnerships developed with other schools, is driving improvement further. Systems used to track pupils' progress and set targets for learning have been improved significantly since the last inspection. Self-evaluation is accurate and staff are clear about what is needed to raise attainment further. This demonstrates clearly the school's good capacity to improve. Professional training for teachers, support and administration staff is used effectively to raise attainment. Members of the governing body have good levels of skills, knowledge and understanding and are not afraid to challenge senior leaders. Through their frequent visits to school, they have developed a good understanding of day-to-day running of the school and offer a good level of support and challenge to senior leaders. Leaders, managers and the governing body ensure policies and procedures for safeguarding are met and that practice is of a good standard. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and the majority are recorded effectively. However, recording identified risks on lesson plans is not undertaken sufficiently rigorously in some subject areas. The senior leadership team and staff have ensured that the school is an inclusive community. Systems to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination within the school are good and, as a result, successfully eliminate any gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils. The curriculum is good and matched to pupils' needs. The recent focus on reading has seen an upward trend in attainment.

The introduction of a more creative curriculum has produced numerous benefits and contributes extremely successfully to the school's outstanding spiritual, moral and social provision. Leaders have built highly successful partnerships with a range of organisations, which benefit pupils and the local community. For example, regular work with dance and music groups develops pupils' confidence and independence skills. Links with other schools and communities both locally and abroad, including a school in Uganda, have helped to develop pupils' understanding of life in other communities. Overall, the school is successful at engaging parents and carers. They are kept informed about what is happening in school through the use of daily diaries.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 January 2012

Dear Pupils and sixth form students

Inspection of Dryden School, Gateshead, NE9 5UR

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school. It was lovely to meet you all. It was good to hear how much you value your school and how much you enjoy lessons. We want to send a special 'thank you' to those of you who gave up your time to talk to us at lunch time and told how much you enjoy school. We want to thank also the sixth-form students who made such delicious food for us when we visited the café. We agree with those of you who told us that you think your school is good. These are just some of the things we enjoyed particularly:

- the friendly and polite welcome you all give to visitors
- the way in which staff care for you and help you to make future choices
- the way in which you are all so caring and helpful towards each other and enjoy working together
- the hard work you put into learning and the way in which you are all keen to learn new things.

We have asked your teachers to do two things to improve your school even more and we think you can help to achieve some of them:

- to work with you to make sure you all have a better understanding of your learning targets and what you need to do improve your work
- to write down on lesson plans always how to keep everyone safe

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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