

# Dryden School

Shotley Gardens, Low Fell, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE9 5UR

**Inspection dates** 24–25 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The exceptional leadership of the executive headteacher, school headteacher and the senior leadership team has enabled the school to build on the many strengths found at the previous inspection. Together, they provide inspirational leadership to other staff and ensure that teaching and overall performance continue to improve apace.
- The impressive and highly skilled governing body ensures that it has an accurate view of the school's still improving performance, including the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Governors check that disadvantaged students who are supported through additional funding achieve at least as well as their classmates.
- Middle leaders receive good support from senior leaders and contribute to their work to raise achievement and improve teaching. However, insufficient time has elapsed to enable them to develop their skills fully in analysing the impact of the new curriculum on improving students' progress and attainment.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled in working with students with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- Students across the school achieve outstandingly well. Progress in their key communication skills is of very high quality because of the skilled use of signs and symbols. The most-able students make remarkable gains in reading, writing and mathematics.
- High quality spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is a strength of the school and underpins every aspect of its work.
- Parents are overwhelming pleased with the school. They enjoy the weekly invitation to the 'café morning' and the regular contact they have with school staff.
- The curriculum is based on a thorough assessment of individual needs. Furthermore, it prepares students well for the next stage of their education and life in modern Britain.
- Innovative systems are firmly in place to check students' progress and, as a result, any student who falls behind quickly catches up.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Students who are able to express their views all say that they enjoy school, feel safe and that behaviour is very good.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students gain a wide range of qualifications, benefit from a bespoke curriculum and enjoy excellent vocational opportunities.
- The very strong, caring ethos is immediately evident on entering the school. This creates an oasis where students are enthusiastic about their learning and thrive, particularly in their personal and social development.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes and carried out joint observations with both the executive headteacher and the school headteacher.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteachers, senior and middle leaders, governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and the Vice-Chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector visited an assembly and observed break and lunch time arrangements.
- The inspector also spoke formally and informally to students about their experiences in school and listened to their views.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to during the inspection, of responses to a recent internal school parent questionnaire and of the 10 completed staff questionnaires. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to include any relevant comment in the report.
- The inspector looked at the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation including information about students' performance and progress, their written work, school improvement planning, and minutes of governing body meetings. In addition, she examined procedures and practice for safeguarding and for monitoring attendance.

## Inspection team

Maureen Coleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Dryden School serves students between the ages of 11 and 19 years who have severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- In April 2013, Dryden School moved from a soft federation to a hard federation with Hill Top School and a new executive headteacher was appointed in January 2015.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Students are mostly drawn from the Metropolitan Borough of Gateshead.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- A very few students are looked after by the local authority.
- A third of students, an above average figure, are disadvantaged and are known to be eligible for free school meals. They are, therefore, eligible for support through the pupil premium. This is additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for students.
- The school holds the International School Award, the ACT Citizenship Quality Standard, and Arts Mark Gold. It is also a nationally accredited Healthy School and is involved in the Comenius School Partnership.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership and management by developing further the skills of middle leaders in recording and analysing the impact of the new curriculum on improving students' progress and attainment.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- The executive headteacher and school headteacher are an inspirational team who are determined, and rightly ambitious, to ensure that the very best provision and care are provided for all students at Dryden School. They have established a culture of high expectations where staff are dedicated to supporting students' academic and personal progress. Equality of opportunity for all lies at the heart of everything the school does.
- The headteachers and senior leadership team are fully supported by the staff and by the highly committed and skilled governing body. Staff morale is high. Effective partnership work with support and therapy staff ensures best practice is widespread. Discrimination is robustly tackled in all its forms.
- Leadership of the sixth form is very strong and highly effective in supporting students to make informed choices about the next steps in their education or training.
- Middle leaders are passionate about students' well-being and progress. They work tirelessly to ensure no aspect of students' needs is overlooked and that there is no discrepancy between the achievement of different groups. However, their skills in measuring the impact on students' progress and attainment of the recently implemented new curriculum are underdeveloped and not fully measured and recorded.
- Disadvantaged students receive additional one-to-one support in lessons through the additional pupil premium funding. This enables them to make accelerated progress and achieve outstandingly well.
- Assessments are focused on the progress students make against their own individual targets, which are broken down into very small steps. By sharing accurate assessments and planning, staff are able to provide optimum conditions for all students, including those in the sixth form, to secure exceptional progress.
- Learning is observed regularly and this is linked systematically to teachers' performance management targets and progression on the pay scale. Professionals from outside the school are consulted to verify the school's judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. Any underperformance is robustly challenged. As a result, the leadership of teaching and learning is outstanding.
- The management of students' behaviour is a strength of the school. The highly successful 'point system' the school has developed is very effective and supports students' good attendance and the development of exemplary behaviour. This all contributes significantly to the purposeful learning environment in all classes.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective and statutory requirements are met. Staff understand fully the comprehensive policies and procedures.
- High quality training is available to all staff. This ensures they maintain up-to-date professional knowledge and skills to continue to improve the quality of provision and support for the wide-ranging needs of every student.
- The developing links between the two schools within the federation have improved and developed teachers' skills and increased the learning experiences available to students. The sharing of resources and good practice has also been of immense benefit to students.
- The broad, balanced and enterprising curriculum is highly successful in motivating and inspiring students to work hard, although the full impact on individual progress and achievement is not fully evaluated. The recent trip to Ireland and links with a school in Rwanda and Uganda are highly successful in enabling students to develop skills and understand British values and prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- The recent focus on phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and the purchase of a new reading scheme are supporting the more able readers to read with confidence and enjoyment.
- Parents are very supportive of the school, which works extremely well in partnership with them. As well as engaging parents in their children's learning and fostering good relations with everyone, the school provides good opportunities for parents to meet one another for mutual support. One parent who spoke described the staff as 'amazing'.
- The local authority has a very accurate view of the school's performance. It provides high quality support to the governors and school leaders, checking the quality of teaching and evaluating its work.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The very effective governing body is well informed, highly skilled and brings a wealth of relevant experience to the differing roles of members. Governors have a thorough understanding of the school's performance, data and the quality of teaching. They provide strong challenge and support to leaders. Robust dialogue and challenge are features of many meetings and governors are fully aware of the systems to tackle any underperformance.

- Governors know the strengths and areas for development of the federation and school. They make an excellent contribution to the school's work and they share the leaders' drive and determination to meet the needs of all students. They are also clear about the link between teachers' classroom performance, students' achievement and salary increases. They closely monitor performance management arrangements and make sure teachers only receive financial reward if their students meet their achievement targets.
- The governing body includes a number of parent governors. They bring a particular insight into how well their children are taught and into how well the school meets their needs.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the school's work to promote tolerance and the need to prepare students thoroughly for life in modern Britain. They are regular visitors to school and ensure policies and procedures, especially those relating to safeguarding, including training in safer recruitment, are kept up to date.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Routines are understood and consistently applied. Together with palpable respect for students' dignity and support for their physical and emotional well-being, these strengthen the development of students' exemplary behaviour.
- Any challenging behaviour is managed exceptionally well by staff, with minimum disruption to learning.
- Students are well aware of the school's high expectations for their behaviour. The 'point system' within school to manage their behaviour is impressive. It encourages students to earn points which can be exchanged for weekly and termly prizes. It fosters tolerance between students and engenders courteous attitudes towards each other and the staff. Furthermore, it promotes good attendance which has improved year on year.
- The excellent relationships between students and staff contribute to their very positive attitudes to learning.
- The older students are excellent role models for younger students and take this responsibility seriously. They spontaneously offer assistance and guidance to younger students and are proud to be members of their school. This is particularly evident during social times when students relish the opportunity to engage with other students across year groups and from different cultures.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Risk assessments and behaviour risks are systematically recorded and analysed, with appropriate action taken if required.
- Arrangements for students' arrival at school are exemplary. Students receive the highest level of care and engagement with staff as they enter school. Every action by staff is focused on reducing any tension the students may have, including playing contemporary music for the first part of each day.
- Communication cues are consistently used by staff, with no exceptions. Students increasingly understand these prompts and grow in confidence in moving from one activity or location to another. This is especially evident when they enter the school hall for assembly and during the procedures at the end of the school day.
- Students are fully aware of the different forms of bullying. School staff diligently teach students about the different forms it can take including homophobic, racist, and other forms of bullying based on prejudice. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, including on the internet.

## **The quality of teaching** is outstanding

- Teaching over time in most subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics, is never less than good and is outstanding overall. It ensures students achieve exceptionally well and make excellent progress.
- The teaching of reading is very effective due to the regular teaching of phonics. In addition, the development of reading is supported by the recent purchase of new reading books with content more closely matched to students' interests.
- The teaching of mathematical skills is exemplary and successfully enables students to gain the necessary understanding and ability to manage day-to-day situations. For example, in food technology, students confidently follow instructions to collect the correct amount of ingredients to make sandwiches and have

an understanding of the importance of accounting and the management of perishable goods.

- Teachers have very high expectations and lessons are a hive of activity. Students respond well to instructions given by staff and engage positively in the variety of methods used to capture and stimulate their learning. This was particularly evident in a literacy lesson; students began the lesson by manipulating dough into different shapes to strengthen their hand movements before moving on to a writing activity in which they used their phonic skills very well.
- Staff are highly competent in meeting the needs of students with complex learning difficulties. There is much exemplary practice in the way students with profound and multiple learning difficulties engage in activities. For example, the development of communication skills is high priority and staff use a range of approaches including singing, symbols, pictures and objects to support learning.
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants is exceptional. Adults within the classroom are quick to anticipate when to intervene with students in their learning. They skilfully adapt tasks to maintain students' keen engagement and excellent progress.
- Adults manage students' behaviour exceptionally well. This contributes significantly to the positive learning environment in every classroom.
- Lessons are planned comprehensively and provide activities that are very well matched to individual students' needs and interests. This supports excellent progress across subjects and classes.
- Ongoing assessment forms part of every lesson and supports students' next steps in learning. Teachers' marking of students' work is usually verbal, regular and accurate. Written comments on students' work give direction for further work. There is also a record of responses made by students resulting from the self-evaluation of their own work.

### The achievement of pupils

**is outstanding**

- As a consequence of their severe and complex learning difficulties, students' attainment when they first enter the school is significantly below average compared to schools nationally. However, from these starting points, students make sustained and outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics and also exceptionally strong progress in their personal and social development
- Inspection evidence, including students' progress data, scrutiny of students' work and observations during lessons, demonstrate that students make consistently good and often outstanding progress in other subjects too.
- Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties make exceptional progress in developing ways of expressing themselves, making choices and responding to activities through gesture, movement and vocalisation. This was especially evident during a session about creation: students engaged in tactile activities to communicate their understanding of different elements of the environment, for instance water, light and dark, sense of smell, touch and sound.
- Students develop increasing control over their physical movements. Some use opportunities to bounce on a trampoline, use the pool for hydrotherapy sessions and take part in physical activities, such as sitting basketball. They develop an awareness of their hands through the use of tools such as pencils, gluing activities, brushes and using appropriate utensils during food technology lessons.
- The most-able students learn about the sounds that letters make. They label pictures using symbols and text, are able to identify the letters at the start of some words, write a series of sentences with text and symbols and form their letters correctly. In mathematics, they learn about place value, can sequence numbers in the correct order, follow a list of instructions to solve problems and work with simple fractions.
- There is no significant difference in the attainment and achievement of different groups of students in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged students make the same outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics as their classmates. This is because the school uses the funding effectively to meet the needs of students by increasing adult support and providing highly effective programmes of study for individuals.
- The school does not use early entry for GCSE. However, all students leave with a range of accreditations.

### The sixth form provision

**is outstanding**

- The progress and achievement students make in English, mathematics and their personal development in the sixth form are quite exceptional, resulting from outstanding teaching over time. The excellent attitudes

to learning displayed by the students, including those with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, disadvantaged students and the most able, enable them to make remarkable progress both academically and socially.

- The programmes of study and accredited courses fully meet the students' individual needs and abilities. This, together with effective college links, enables them to transfer successfully to the next stage of their education or training.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Expectations are high and students delight in the opportunities to act as role models for younger students, promoting exemplary attitudes to learning and behaviour. Students are well informed about potential risks and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Relationships between students and staff are outstanding and staff are very keen for students to do as well as they possibly can and make the most of their time in the sixth form.
- Highly effective leadership in the sixth form focuses on students developing their independence, confidence and acquiring life skills which will prepare them very well for life in modern Britain. An excellent example is their running of the school café and the enterprise opportunities this presents for the students. Furthermore, this, together with many opportunities to undertake work experience, ensures students develop the necessary skills they need to live in today's society.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131200
<b>Local authority</b>	Gateshead
<b>Inspection number</b>	447881

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	49
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	12
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Sergison
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Bryant (Executive Headteacher) Dawn Winter (Head of School)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 January 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 420 3811
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